

Death and Dying Eifel Retreat

*11-14 April 2013
Teachings by: James Low*

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Where you see numbers like {1:36} that refers to the place in the audio recording where James was speaking. You can listen to the whole recording of the Eifel Spring 2013 retreat here: <http://eifelaudio.simplybeing.co.uk/2015/07/24/second-post/>

James also taught on death, dying and the six bardos in the Eifel retreat, 23-26 April 2017. The text supporting this retreat was **THE ROOT VERSES OF THE SIX BARDOS**. The six bardos describe all aspects of our human lives, including the process of death and dying. They provide us with an opportunity to discover how we can recognize all aspects of living and dying as an expression of our buddha nature, our limitless and true nature.

THE ROOT VERSES OF THE SIX BARDOS is published in the **COLLECTED WORKS OF C.R. LAMA** in 2013 (Chapter 4), edited by James Low. The German edition was published in 2016 under the title **GESAMMELTE SCHRIFTEN VON CHIMED RIGDZIN RINPOCHE**. You can listen to this retreat at <http://eifelaudio.simplybeing.co.uk/2017/06/15/spring-2017/>

Contents

Life and death	4
Mum and the pear	5
The Body	12
Clarity is enough	14
Dzogchen in Buddhism	15
Question about whether the artificial is our imagination.....	17
Simply sitting	21
The Buddhist view	21
What is death?.....	25
On Refuge and bodhicitta.....	32
Emptiness	35
Movement	44
Rigpa	44
Practice advice.....	48
Questions and Answers.....	49
Question about being addicted to activity.....	52
Question about meditation.....	53
Question about karma	54
Question about rebirth	56
Being in the world.....	57
Tonglen 1	61
Tonglen 2	62
Experience	62
Trusting my inner voice	67
The ego	68
Process of dying.....	71
Faith and logic.....	76
Dzogchen on death.....	79
Nature.....	82
Guru Yoga	83
Remarks on Guru Yoga	85
Phowa	86
Illusion and impact	87
Preparing for death	89
Being with the dying.....	91
Meditation and non-meditation.....	93
Problems in meditation	93
Merit and virtue.....	95
Attachment and acceptance.....	100
Question about integrating inside and outside	107
Question about what to do after a death	113
One life to another	115
Question about the nature of mind	117
Question about perceptual spaces	117
Love	118

Extracts

...Life and death - all the modalities of existence are embedded within the great open space of our awareness which is ungraspable and ever-present. If you try to grasp it you'll never find anything. If you open to it and relax into it, it's always there. This is the liberation from the duality of life and death

...It's impossible to think your way out of samsara. Trying to use thoughts to deconstruct thoughts is an endless journey and we become anxious and over intense. The idea of trying to use the mind to create freedom just creates new kinds of prisons.

...Being in a shitty bad mood, feeling depressed, useless and stupid, hating your life and hating other people - that is also the radiance of the dharmakaya.

...In the Buddhist view, contact is vital because contact is the quality of non-duality. Non-duality means that there is no clear or fixed boundary between self and other. By trying to sort things out inside ourselves we're abandoning the field of experience and entering a domain of alienation.

...Very often we imagine that ordinary life is the easy part because we are all here and we are surviving, getting on with things, Religious life, we imagine, is something special, higher and more difficult. From the point of view of dzogchen, however, it's the opposite way round. Recognising your own nature is not so difficult; what is much more difficult is coming into interaction with other people whilst not losing your ground.

...There is no way to describe a pear that gives the same experience as eating it. You can go to an art gallery and see many still life paintings of lemons, grapes, peaches, pears and all different kinds of fruit. The grapes in a Caravaggio painting may look incredibly lifelike but you still can't eat them. They are mnemonics, they are reminders; they evoke a memory of the felt sense of a grape. It's just like a grape, but it's not a grape.

...With the final dissolving of the wind element, the basic movement between subject and object, it is like a very still calm day; it's as if nothing is happening. But you are still there because awareness is prime, primal, primordial - there from the very beginning. Awareness is not generated by movement...

Life and death

This is a very nice time for us to be thinking about life and death because we are on the cusp, just on the edge of winter, very beginning of spring we can see how we still have mental attitudes about being winter and a hope of leaping into another way of being with spring time and through that we can see that our identity is so intimately connected with what's happening around us. This is the most central to all of the Buddha's teachings - impermanence, that although we have the sense of the continuity of a personal self that goes on through time, how we are is always linked to what's happening around us. There is no individual isolated self-entity, we are an energetic system which is in ceaseless conversation with the environment around it. How our life is, how our death is, is dependent very much on circumstances.

From the point of view of dzogchen the main focus is not on trying to stabilise the field of experience, not trying to control the circumstances but to integrate whatever is arising into the basic openness of awareness. This is the central point. Of course this gets limited or sabotaged by our desire to be in control, to have life on our terms and we usually expend a lot of energy trying to achieve this. But inevitably change happens, there's no way to stop change and therefore once you have a construction you have repair, just going round the stupa you can see what the winter has done to the paint. So some new repair will have to be done. It's the same with our bodies, we are having to attend to factors which don't do so well. Of course it's good to have a happy life, healthy life, it's nothing wrong in doing your best to maintain that. The issue is though, if there is a lot of anxiety about the maintenance of the form of our life, because the form of our life has been so invested that it is the sole sight of our sense of who we are, then it's very fragile. We become sick, people close to us die, we get a disability of some kind and we no longer feel like ourselves. This often leads into depression, sense of alienation because this is not me. How I am doesn't fit in with the image of how I thought my life would be.

So from the point of view of dzogchen that turmoil which is created by that sort of attitude is unnecessary and unhelpful. Unhelpful because it tends to trigger more activity, I have to try harder to ensure that my life continues on the right patterns. And whilst we are doing the focus our attention is on moving external phenomena around us and moving internal states as it were within us. And this activity is of its very nature dualistic, that is to say, there is a subject and an object. There is an evaluation of good and bad, right and wrong, happy and sad. And this means that then the fundamental tear in our existence the division between myself and what is around me continues. So with dzogchen as with the higher tantras are all grounded in the view of non-duality. That is to say, all experience all phenomena whether we call them outside or inside have the same ground which is emptiness itself. And it's the realignment of ourselves, the reintegration into what is already there, the state of openness this is the true path of liberation. And the endless work of adjusting circumstances is the path of getting lost. This can often feel quite radical because it seems to us kind of automatic, a given a clear necessity that we should be busy about proving and developing our existence. But the view is usually located in the idea of myself as somebody with an individual burden. I have to take care of myself. There's nothing holding me, there's nothing keeping me safe therefore if I don't do it, it won't happen and that will be bad. So that there is a fundamental existential anxiety.

The practice in dzogchen is to relax and open to experience directly the unborn awareness which is like an infinite safety net, because the ground of our being, not as some abstract theoretical notion but as a living presence, and with that the forms of our experience are allowed to take on their proper size, their proper stars. They are no longer over inflated as being the true meaning of our life. Because these forms are always changing. So, essentially the issue of life and death is to see all the modalities of existence are embedded within the great open space of our awareness which is ungraspable and ever present. If you try to grasp it you'll never find anything. If you open to it and relax into it, it's always there. And this is the liberation from the duality of life and death. We will go into this with various practises with a background view of dzogchen. Maybe we could do some simple practice just to settle. Do some basic shine practice, calming practice. So sitting in a comfortable way, take up a focus, on the flow of the nostrils the breath at nose or focusing your gaze on some simple external form say a mark on the carpet and just maintain that focus of attention and if your mind wanders off, very gently bring it back onto that focus.

Mum and the pear

When we do that kind of practice we become aware of how impermanent the content of our mind is. Thoughts, feelings and sensations are rapidly changing. Different kinds of evaluations of our own experience also come and go and change. One way of thinking of that is the mind is being born and dying all the time, some new thought arises it fills the space in that moment it's the entirety of our world of our experience and then it's gone. And when its gone its gone something else perhaps similar can come but that thought is gone forever. The same with everything we experience around us is changing, people change, rooms change, the weather changes, the economic situation changes we cannot find stability, but what we have is a pseudo stability a kind of stability which is grounded in concepts.

For example, some years ago my mother died. Until she died my mother was alive; she was alive for a long time over ninety years. I remember many, many things about my mother {1:36} so I experienced a lot of different moments with my mother. I experienced her when she was young and very active and doing things and when she was old and not doing very much. These are moments or snapshots, each lasting a short period of time. I remember walking up to the shops with her or sitting on the bus with her and her chatting to people. Many different moments. A moment is something in time; there was a beginning, a middle and an end. Beginning, middle and end. Many, many of these; in fact that is what my mother was made up of – of moments. The moments are held together by certain concepts. In the neighbourhood where my mother lived many people knew her and so they had their particular story of who my mother was. My father had his story of who my mother was, and my mother's mother had her story of who my mother was. And I have my stories.

Each of these stories is a kind of thread and if you like, my mother as an example is like a big, big box of many different kinds of little beads and everybody who met her and everybody who meets us comes with their own little thread and they pick some little beads out of the box and they make a necklace. And then they think this is John, this is Mary, this is my friend this is my enemy... And these patterns seem to be for us who that person is. We have a sense of the other person, we seem to know them. We see regularities, patterns, features that we like or don't like. This is all a construction. It not to say that we shouldn't make patterns, after all we are pattern-making creatures. The mind, the dualistic consciousness that we have, is always interested in patterns. The question is, do these patterns have any substantial truth to them? Do they reveal any true essence? Or is it simply our luck that we get from the people we meet a particular flavour a particular contour which is our sense of them. Someone else meeting that same person gets a very different experience.

So if you have several people all meeting one person and these different people have a different experience of that one person - what is the basis for thinking there is one person? {4:34} Maybe each of us is many different people. And that would be a normal Buddhist point of view that we are if you like the five skandhas or the five components basic building blocks of identity which come together in different formations like a child's kaleidoscope. And as these patterns arise and fall they are doing so not just out of themselves but in relation to the environment. So when we meet different kinds of people they reveal us to them and of course us to ourselves. When different kinds of people allow us to feel relaxed and free or uptight. It's not that they are kind of doing something to us to make us in that way, but they have a particular kind of resonance there is a particular kind of vibration or quality about them that in response to which we find ourselves opening or closing. And a lot of the time we don't really have a choice about it, it just happens. You kind of warm to someone or you're a bit wary. The person you're a bit wary of is very warm for someone else. This is a particular configuration of patterning of our own energy that we have likes and dislikes. We have favourite colours, favourite food, favourite times of the year and so on. Ways in which we expand and we contract. Expansion and contract is the basic pulsation of the world its going on all the time in terms of lungs, the heart, blood vessels. We are moving out and we are moving in. We look and we see, we listen and we hear our sense organs are both active and passive. In the same way our mind and emotions are also active and passive.

So the 'I' engages with the world directly, and what I have is an ongoing conversation. A conversation which allows particular patterns or shapes to arise and these shapes have a significance primarily in themselves they don't imply any particular essence. So say for example that you find someone who is very easy to be with, you might feel that, they are a really nice person, for you, for the time that your meeting them. Maybe some years later you meet them and you've nothing much to say, you think "Oh, that's a bit strange." Sometimes we have that with friends, you don't see them for a while and your lives have changed, you met them in a context where you had shared activity and then when you meet them again you're doing very different things and after a few sentences, "Ah yeah, anyway nice to see you." Nothing much to, there all this blocked. But I like this person. I like this person is an idea, it's an abstraction, it's something removed from the actual evolving revelational field of direct experience. And what

we actually have is our direct experience, moment, by moment by moment - its changing. So when we think of people like our parents, if you have children, friends, lovers, work colleagues and so on we construct notions of their identity. In the same way as we construct notions of our own identity. These notions or narratives or concepts give a sense of continuity but the actuality is dynamic and changing.

So we live in a kind of double world, the world of the immediacy the senses which is instant but unpredictable and ungovernable and simultaneously we are living a world of our narratives, our conceptual organisation, the way in which we construe or pattern or bring together {9:38} and create the shape which makes sense to us and these are maintainable because of their very structure which is to say, they are belief systems. Because a belief is something that doesn't have a rational basis it's a field in which you can invest a lot of energy. If something has a rational basis it shows itself in a very direct form. So you can say I believe in god. This is a wonderful belief because you can never prove whether it is right or wrong. In fact you have to believe in god or you can't know god because god is by definition unknowable. It's the great mysterious quality. So we believe that we know certain things but it's a belief.

This woman who died some years ago I believed to be my mother, and so every time I met her I called her 'mum'. My brother also did that. Nobody else did that. Many people met her but they did not know her real name because her real name was 'mum'. So in that way for me she was my mum. I knew who she was. She was 'mum'. But that wasn't who she was. Her being my mum was an interpretation of the potential of the situation, an interpretation which took a slice of the potential. My interest in her, my resonance, my vibration, and hers constellated when we met in the pattern of a mother and son. And all the other patternings of her life were unavailable to me. So my truth of her was the truth of a slice but not the whole cake. In fact we never get the whole cake of anyone, and no one ever gets the whole cake of us and we don't even get the whole cake of ourselves. That is to say there are always bits missing, now why is that? We are unknowable because we are not a thing.

With a simple object like a glass you can know it with some confidence whoever of course how the glass appears depends on the lighting in the room, the quality of our eyes not everyone here has twenty-twenty vision, and so this is a rather blurred object for many of us here. But we believe that there is a real glass {12: 54} This is our construct our take on this.

Now when we meet human beings its much, much more complicated. So from the point of view of dzogchen our manifestation of the world is the arising of the energy of the ground potential. What is called *rigpai sal*, the energy of the dharmakaya that manifests itself according to situations. So what we get in our interactions is particular patterning. If we are very veiled that is to say if we have many assumptions, many judgements, many expectations and if we are very distracted, if we're confused, if we're filled with emotions then the ways in which this energy manifests for us becomes solidified and dulled and takes on a particular kind of intensity. So that we imagine that we are seeing something very predictable. If we start to let go of these assumptions, judgement, predictions and allow the immediacy of the field of experience to reveal itself its much less tangible. Must less to get because when we grasp at the world we

grasp at it with our concepts, with our memories, our beliefs, our predictions. If we drop these then it's like closing your hands so that the fingers are inside. When you've got your hands like fists you can't grasp very much at all. Everything is there but you can't really pick it up very easily.

So when some people get terrible accidents or leprosy and they lose their fingers, it looks very difficult you see them trying to eat with their handsets like that. That looks very hard because in our world we want to grasp things in the same way we like to grasp things with our mind it makes us feel intelligent that we can remember so many things and make plans. But if you grasp the judging and you see what it is in the moment it arises and you then let go of it, and you let go and you let go you have a revelation which is there and then gone. And then there's another and then there's another and then there's another. If you do tantric practice this is something which is stressed again and again in the meditation text - the mind is unborn and unceasing. When you look to find something substantial you don't find anything. {16:09} substantial, you don't find anything. That's is to say it's not born, it doesn't come into existence as anything which you can hold onto and yet its unceasing, because there is always something going on. Experience doesn't stop it's just going on and on and on. The experience of what? This is the cross roads point between samsara and nirvana, in samsara - our world, repetition of our individual private experience of the world, the world we have to struggle to make sense of. From that point of view what is arising is a lot of stuff which presents us with endless choices, do I want this? Do I not want this? Will I be close to this? Will I be far from this? If we take the other road the road of nirvana, then what is arising is not stuff at all, it's not things it is the energy ground of our being, it is the display of the radiance of the mind. We are moving within this limpet this shiny field of light, colour, sounds, sensation, tastes, smells - all of which is ungraspable.

You say, "Um, this is a very sweet pear, delicious!" In that moment you are creating a construct because when you bite into the pear, and your mouth automatically starts to move around, breaking the pear down releasing the sweet juice. It's very sweet, so many things are happening in your mouth to say it's very sweet. Doesn't say anything at all. You have something incredibly complex experience, multi-faceted, multi layered experience which has to do with the pressure that your mouth has to do. Because if you have a soft pear and crisp apple, chewing is very different, then you try a banana - completely different again, then you chew on a bit of coconut - very different. All of this is part of our embodied experience. This is hard, this is soft, this is sweet this is such a surface level description, it misses the lived complexity and the important thing here from the point of view of dzogchen is that the complex experience is always changing. But when you say, "O, try one of the pears there really sweet." You've now got this thing a pear, the pear I ate and the pear in the bowl are the same kind of thing there are both pears, and I can tell you they're good they're sweet - but we don't know what the other person's mouth is. Maybe they don't like pears. I like the pear at this moment, why, because it has shown itself to me. Unfortunately for the poor pear the only way I can enjoy it is to destroy it, by biting it to pieces.

It's the same way with our life, moment by moment we devour the world like great monsters. You go for a walk in the woods, your walking past the trees, one minute you're saying hello to the tree then you're saying goodbye to the tree, maybe you think this is the most marvellous tree so you fall in love with it and you decide to live forever in front of that tree. In India some of the wandering sadhu's do that, they walk around for years then they find a tree and they sit there for another thirty years. But we're not going to do that in Germany in the cold. So we are consuming the world, it's not a capitalist consumer station because there are no commodities. The actuality of the world is that there are no commodities at all. The structure of our interpretive matrix, our conceptualisation that create items that can be purchased, owned and consumed and depleted. It is the mind that creates commodities. What we actually have are experiences.

So in Tibetan texts they talk a lot about *dagdzin*. *Dag* means I and *dzin* means to grasp, it means grasping at the sense there is an inherent self-nature in a phenomena, that there is something to get. So here is a pear, a nice piece of fruit, I want to eat the fruit, I want to have the fruit but the fruit is not a thing. You see it in the bowl so you see a shape and colour, you decide that you are going to eat the pear, you stretch your arm out and you have the experience of the extension of your muscles, you grasp the pear and you can already feel from the texture of the skin whether it's very firm or soft. When you pick it up, its weight reveals itself through the tension of your fingers, whether you're holding it tight, whether you need to tense your muscles or not. And you bring it close to you and some smell is revealed, and then you open your mouth to take the bite that depends on the contouring of the surface of the pear. That is to say, the pear is an aspect of conversation or communication with the world and then you bite into it and there's the movement of the mouth, the movement of the throat as you swallow it and so on.

This is our embodied experience of the world with whatever we do, walking {23:06} taking, eating, lying down to sleep it is entirely relational. There's subject and object, there is a ceaseless intercourse between our subjectivity our presence which we take to be the presence of I, me, myself, a presence which stands in relation to these many, many different possibilities of the environment. I experience this I experience that I experience so many things and again there is a crossroads. I can have an accumulation of experiences, I saw this, I saw that, I did the other, many, many things stacked up as memories but when you tell someone about what you did - it's not the same. ...There is no way to describe a pear that gives the same experience as eating it. You can go to an art gallery and see many still-life paintings of lemons, grapes, peaches, pears and all different kinds of fruit. The grapes in a Caravaggio painting may look incredibly lifelike but you still can't eat them. They are mnemonics, they are reminders; they evoke a memory of the felt sense of a grape. It's just like a grape, but it's not a grape.

In the same way you tell someone about the restaurant you went to, and the sale they prepared was fantastic it was so crisp and fresh and so on. Saliva comes into your mouth as you describe it and the other person they get the dry words in their ear.

Talking about, thinking about is second hand, it's very.... in food, but our education system and the thrust of our human intelligence is such that we tend to go for the commentary rather than

the immediacy. And because the commentary, the interpretation the description, the memory is thin food you need to eat a lot of it with a big spoon. So we are always thinking always talking. When we do a bit of practice though and we are quiet walking outside in a very still open state everything you encounter is like a deep rich food. It fills you up its immediately there. It's quite paradoxical that's this food which is free, the rich deep texture of {26:00} fully embodied experience which is always available we deny to ourselves by our very reliance on concepts. And because the concepts offer a fantasy of stasis, predictability, reliability they remind us "Oh, that happened then." "I remember last year, I remember what I did in the summer." That brings loss. That is to say the feeling of loss is the loss of the capacity to put the concept which is invested onto a lived experience. That is to say, because my mother is dead I cannot visit my mother. So I have a concept of my mother but I can wander around the world and I can go into many old folks homes and I can go up to old ladies and say, "mum, mum." After a while they throw me out the door. She's not there.

So I have the concept and the concept beings the loss, so every now and then I remember my mum and I miss my mum. If I don't remember my mum I don't miss my mum because she's not there in the field. So loss is linked to conception the immediacy of experience there is no loss, there is no lack there is no deficit. Because when you go into a concept, "Ah, shit I remember in this town there used to be so many cinemas we'd go there, they were really nice, now everyone sits at home, looking their fucking computer. You know we're not social anymore." We remember things and we compare and we contrast, we create all these stories. Things have changed. I remember this, this is not available, this concept like a piece of Lego I can't find a place where it fits in. That is what loss is. Somebody dies, oh they've gone, that is to say my construct of that person which is mine now has no hook with which to hang itself on. So when I say I miss them, I miss being able to activate the patterning of my concept, my memories to not be able to continue the conversation I had with them. Of course people take on emotional significance for us and if people close to us die we feel a sadness about that. But when we invest in another person, well if you invest in a bank you know what bank you've put your money in. When you put your investment out there in something you know where it is. But say, you feel about someone - I love you - you're so important for me. Where are you putting the investment? It feels as if you are putting the investment in the other person but your actually putting your investment in your mental construct what psychoanalysts would call the object relation, the field of internal objects through which you mediate your experience of the other person. Because its this interpretive structure in your head which becomes full of the values and feelings and memories about the person. So when you meet the person its through that lens of liking, not liking, feeling close {30:24} or distant.

The over investment or the deep investment that we can have in the other the reason we like people is that they enrich us."Ah, I really want to be with you. I really like you." The first bit is more honest than the second. I really like you means that when I'm with you - you make me feel good. So you're very good, why are you good? Because you make me feel good. You're good for me. In that way we are absorbing from the world an energy which helps us to create a benign positive sensation in our self which then reassures us that being alive, being with other people is ok.

The other person is changing, the other person has many, many things going on in their life that we don't know. But we maintain a stable image of the person. We like them or we don't like them. And so our interaction with them is mediated through our image of them. So if they die or they go away we now have this very invested structure in ourselves - and what do we do with it? Because it's now not pertaining to anything outside. But you can create this image bank in your mind out of something which doesn't exist in the world at all anyway. You get people who are very fond of Star Trek and they have conventions still in America after so many years people go along, all these trekies dressed up in all their gear and their mind is filled with lots of details about the adventures of this Star Trek ship. So they have an object relation of that.

And you also have people they are called Buddhists, who create in their minds, very invested images of Chenrezig, Tara, Padmasambhava and so on. And they will know many, many things about Padmasambhava, where he was born, what kind of clothing he wore, what kind of people he met and so on and this image fills up their mind. Of course this is done with an intention because the practice of tantra is to take the structure which holds samsara in place, the structure of grasping and attachment and to transform it into a structure of liberation. That is to say it uses the same patterning the same, same energy of the five poisons of investment and by subtly turning it liberates it from the inside. So to be obsessed with a boyfriend or girlfriend is probably going to lead to some difficulty. But if you have an obsession with Padmasambhava, if you wake in the morning thinking of Padmasambhava, you fall asleep thinking of Padmasambhava, if the mantra is always going on in your tongue and your world is filled with Padmasambhava, it does the very opposite, instead of it binding you as subject and object into a fixed world of things it loosens you up to be an energetic presence in a field of emergent energy. {34:14} to see that the way in which our mind works is through fusion.

So we began just doing simple sitting meditation, some thought or feeling arises in the mind and you're lost in it, just merge into that. It's the same when we get up and walk around and meet people we say, "hello, hello" we immediately merge into a recognition of that person. There is an opening to the person and there is a capturing of the person. That is to say, out of the image of the person inside us there arise associations, we might remember that they have some kids who have some difficulties, or they're just starting a new relationship or they're retiring or whatever it would be and we ask them, "How is that going?" In that way we seal the pattern of the outside world in relation to the pattern that is inside us. And this creates a solidity and a duality because all that we have is what we know about them. Whereas if you do mantra recitation practises, say of Padmasambhava, you become Padmasambhava. So what is called object and what is called subject merge together. The very same process of fusion which was the cause of getting lost in samsara becomes the basis of liberation.

And the same process happens in dzogchen but it's just done a little bit more quickly. So in the tantric practice you visualise the deity and then you merge into them they dissolve you, you dissolve into them. So two become one become none. So when you're sitting in the meditation and you're focusing on your breath and a thought arises, thought and you, two become one, one becomes (James makes the sound of falling asleep). So that lostness in the meditation is dull and stupid because it's just lost in the thought, but when you consciously merge into

Padmasambhava you're very fresh. Both lead to an emptiness but one is a dull emptiness because afterwards you think, "Oh, where have I been?" Been off in a daydream, a kind of stupid openness, a bit disorientated. Whereas if you do the tantric dissolving - you're exactly here.

The reason for highlighting it in this way is to say samsara and nirvana are not two separate realms, it's not that you go from one to another. It's exactly the same structure but if you do it with a dull attachment, looking for something. If you bring a heaviness into it it starts to sink. And if you open to it in a light way it reveals that this is the groundless domain of ceaseless display. So this is the main directions we go in and this is very central for thinking of death because the experience of death is the dissolving away of all that we know. So if while we are alive we very caught up in grasping and clinging and the building up of solid interpretation the loss of that edifice will be very worrying. If on the other hand we shift over to living in a very light way, open and responsive to the changing field of experience, then dissolving is much easier because we are used to letting go. And it's not that I so brave so noble am letting go, it's that it's impossible to grasp it. That's the key thing, you cannot grasp anything, all you get is concepts. The thing itself is ungraspable. All you get is stories huge accumulations of stories. So there you are lying and dying "... and another thing I have to tell you". Ah ping - "I'll have to come back and tell them next time, they'll never survive without my truth."

The Body

One of the seemingly stable points of our existence is our body. We are quite familiar with our own body, with how it is, it becomes a stable point of reference which supports us in the notion of personal continuity. So in the Buddhist tradition there are many practises for examining exactly what the status of the body is. Because as long as we think I ahem a body, the is to say it's like a possession then of course you have a lot of fear if you lose your body. And if you imagine you are your body then you also have a greater fear because it's not just a support that you're losing but the very kind of essence or defining quality of who you are. And as we were looking before the break the notion of our body for us is indeed a notion, it's something mediated through the elaboration of concepts. Because we have memories of our body when we were small, of the various things that have happened to it at different stages through our life. And we live in an interpretive relationship with our body. So maybe you wake up one morning and your nose is a bit blocked and you find that your throat gets a bit tight and you think, "eh I'm getting a cold." So we take some things which are occurring and we read them a symptoms of a condition {1:57} we then define the condition, I am developing a cold and then we seek to apply antidotes or modifying factors in relation to that structure. Now we are working with the fact that we have a cold, then we can talk about that to other people, "Oh, I don't feel very well today, I have cold." They say, "O gosh, that's terrible so many people have got it at this time of the year." And so on, so it comes a normalised social phenomena. What is often ignored there is the first stage where you have the presenting, the body showing itself in a different way. What is that prior to the symptom identification pattern of conceptualisation. What are these phenomena before you embed them in a heuristic or interpretative system. Because that's

really what reading something as symptom is, it takes something which could be anything, and you organise it, “Oh, this is a sign that I’m getting a cold.

So we will now do a little bit of meditation which some of you are very familiar with. Its the basic, general Buddhist from of what is called vipassana or in Tibetan *lhagtong* {3:37} it means seeing precisely or looking clearly. And it’s simply the practice of staying present with and trying to identify in the simplest way possible, the very first manifestation of what is there. So rather than catching what is arising and pulling it into an elaborate weighted interpretation, you stay with the simple presentation. So for example, when we’re sitting doing the practice you might feel some tension in your shoulder. Well that’s already an interpretation. What do you actually feel? There is something maybe a bit tight or a bit dull or bit hot or a bit heavy. The raw first presentation of the sensation tends to be like that. So all were doing is trying to take the simplest descriptive term onto the occurrence without feeding into an elaboration of what it means. Because once you think, “Oh I’ve got a sore shoulder.” That’s a concept which in a sense takes you out of time because I’ve got a sore shoulder I better check is my shoulder still sore. So the concept become a kind of time capsule which gives you a permanent reading of how you are likely to be. We don’t want to go in that direction because that’s the usual direction of our conceptualisation in which weave, we take these raw strands and we spin them until we get a yarn, and then we weave that yarn into the clothes the continuing narrative of how we are {5:46}

So here we’re taking just the very first strands and keeping them as a strand itself without any kind of spin being put on it that turns it into a yarn. Does that make sense? The way we do it is quite simple, we start with focus on the breath and allow our attention to settle, and then when we have some degree of stabilisation, we take that focused attention up to the top of our head and then just gently going right down through our body, down to our feet and then back up again. An as we’re passing through the body we’re simply noting whatever is registered. We do it slowly down, slowly up, slowly down and at each stage we’re precisely noting but not elaborating. That is to say, we are taking the middle way, we are not going for the creation of an enduring substance, but we’re not going to the other extreme and saying its nothing at all. We’re seeing the emergent potential, a potential which can be caught and turned into a story or just left there in its immediate simmering quality. And as you go up and down through the body, you can start to notice that these sensations are changing all the time. That actually the continuity of the sensation is very much linked to the continuity of the idea. And the more you let go of idea formation, sensations become much easier to cope with.

So we can try this together. Whatever’s happening you just try the very simplest, like hot citing, burning, itching, simple message to label it and move on, itch, label it and move on.

Clarity is enough

So that's a practice we will do from time to time. It's very useful for many purposes; it's a way of bringing us in touch with the body of revelation, the body of experience prior to conceptual elaboration. And in that body of experience when something arises and it's there, do we need to make sense of it? Or is it meaningful in itself? If its meaningful in itself, its meaningful in a way which is not similar to the meaning that elaborated through conceptual thinking. So if there's a scratching feeling or some kind of tear, when I "sore shoulder, I have a sore shoulder, I remember I pulled the muscle yesterday." Then that's one whole kind of meaning that we are very familiar with. If you don't enter into that, there's just something. What is that? In dzogchen we understand that that immediacy as the self-revelation of the ground of being. That is to say, the open dimension, or the buddha nature, the thusness of existence which is unborn, shows itself, and the meaning of the showing is just the showing. It has no intention, it has no purpose, it's not for anything, it just is. On top of that you can run many sorts of elaborations but these elaborations are a further form of the play of the mind. {2:25} For example, what is sand for? Sand, you get it on the beach, you find it in big pits in cities where they use it for building and so on. So if you are a builder you say that sand is for mixing with cement in order to build walls and so on. If you are child, then you say that sand is for playing with.

Sand itself is not for anything, sand is just there. We bring our schema, our structure onto that raw material and we start to cook it. That is to say, human intelligence mediated through concepts is a kind of cookery, that we have many recipes, recipes we inherit from our parents, from our culture from our schools, and we keep applying these. And sometimes we become so fixated on a dish we like cooking that we feed it to everyone we meet whether they digest it or not and sometimes we are endlessly changing because we can never find what our right taste is. But all of these structure lack an essence. Why? Because they are artificial. It's like a children's game there is no truth in a children's game it is just a play. Children say, "I was just playing." "What were you playing at?" "I wasn't playing at anything I was just playing." "Why were you doing that?" "I don't know I was just playing." The meaning is in the participation. The meaning is in being there, there is nothing other than being there. So in the dzogchen tradition this is called clarity. It means that the clarity of the mind is the presence of the immediacy of manifestation. And that this in itself is enough. When we cook it, when we weave it into a conceptual matrix this is another story or another game. There's nothing wrong with that game, if you know it's a game.

But in the Freudian tradition they talk about repression. So the traditional notion is something happens in our life, an event where we find it difficult to square with, to integrate with our sense of ourselves. So we don't want to know that either we did something or someone else did something or someone did something to us - we just don't want to know that. So we repress it, we put it down inside ourselves. Then we repress the memory that we have repressed it. So you have a kind of double seal. You forget that you've forgotten the thing you wanted to forget. A similar thing happens in relation to our conceptualisation but it goes in the other direction. We project, the is to say, we formulate an interpretation and we put the interpretation onto the phenomena and then we put for example, {6:04} I say this is a watch in my hand, I am saying

this is a watch, as we know there is a small baby in the house, we dangle this in front of the baby it will just go “ah ah ah.” It’s not a watch for the baby. The watch is an elaborated concept that you learn, there is no innate watches in the watch. It’s a cultural concept that we have learned to apply. So we project the watch onto the watch, and then the double move is, we forget that we’ve projected the watch. So we then have a watch, and when you see the watch you believe the watch is self-existing.

So your participation in the elaboration of the construction of the watch is forgotten. Which is why the world becomes full of these fixed stable entities, which seem to be existing in themselves, without our mind they wouldn’t be there. So, what do we hear? The sound itself has no message in it, the human beings making the sound, make it at this time to tell the people to go to the church or something like that, and those who’re educated in that cultural interpretation read the message embedded in the making of the sound of the bell. The clanging of the bell itself has no meaning. It just is. There is sound and emptiness, some vibration in the air. But if you live in the village you think its seven o’clock, “O yeah it’s when the bell goes,.” So the sound and your interpretive matrix have become so fused together that the sound confirms it is seven o’clock. It seems to be carrying that message while you yourself are putting the message into the sound. So the going out of meaning from us to the world is hidden in our experience that meaning is coming to us from the world. Does that make sense? And that’s a fundamental dualistic split that has us as a subject in this world full of different objects, whereas in fact we are co creating the world moment by moment. There is potential as it were on the object side, potential on the subject side and as these interact in the ceaseless unfolding we have our moments of conceptualised meaning. So one of the functions of doing this body scanning is to become more aware of the immediacy of existence prior to conceptual elaboration. And this is a very good basis for deeper investigations of dzogchen meditation.

Dzogchen in Buddhism

So I will just give a little bit of the context of where dzogchen fits in with the general structure of Buddhism. In the Tibetan tradition they make, there are many different paths, many different kinds practises but one way of grouping them is to say there are the causal vehicles and the vehicles of the result. So the causal vehicles are those that seek to establish the cause of enlightenment. And these will be what is called Hinayana or Theravada kind of paths and the general Mahayana the bodhisattva Mahayana.so what it means is that, I want to establish in myself the cause of enlightenment and build up the resources necessary to lead eventually to the fruition of that in terms of full enlightenment. So the basic cause of enlightenment is in the path of renunciation, we can call the Hinayana path is the idea that there is an ending of suffering. As the buddha said in the very first teaching there is suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the means to the cessation of suffering. So liberation comes from following the path to the cessation of suffering. So it means observing how you act, who your intention is, calming your mind and gradually cutting yourself off from all the entanglements that keep the patterns of samsara going. Fundamentally it’s about renouncing attachment and involvement so that you become safe in a state of apartness just as if you have a tortoise or

hedgehog when they are endangered they retreat inside a shell or a prickly structure and keep the danger at bay. The basic structure of duality is still there but it's as if I don't see it then I'm ok - {laughter} {2:44}

Clearly in Mahayana Buddhism there is a critique of that which says - yeah but you're connected with all these other sentient beings, you don't exist just by yourself and in fact in all your previous lives you had many interactions with others particularly with a mother who is taking care of young now you have a debt of gratitude to all those who have been your mothers. Which means to all sentient beings therefore for you to try to be enlightened just by yourself, for yourself this would be no enlightenment at all, this would be an avoidance of the task. Therefore you have to work to prepare yourself for the great task of liberating all beings. Fortunately you have within you buddha nature. So all beings have buddha nature, the potential for awakening but this is obscured by various kinds of coverings. These are categorised in two lots, the obscurations of the afflictions stupidity, aversion, desire, jealousy, pride are the five basic ones, but many, many others. These are the outer obscurations that create the turbulence of our emotional involvement in the world.

Then you have the more subtle obscurations of knowledge. This is quite a complex term it means we are obscured by our reliance on concepts that by making sense of the world we get a kind of liberation, the liberation of the ego, because when you're a small kid and there's a lots of things you don't know and you're always having to ask big people and you think when I grow up I'm going to do what I want because I will know how to do everything. And when you get bigger at least you get quite a lot of freedom, knowledge does bring a kind of freedom but implicit in that freedom is a subtle imprisonment in that again you are relying on a concept that may or may not come to mind. And as we get older as some of us are finding out, the thoughts that we need to have in our head don't always arrive on time. {laughter} So at the high point of your life - you're right in there and gradually you start to lose words and memories and you realise, this is not me secure in my castle of knowledge but this was a kind of patterning. A patterning like a well drilled corps de ballet {5:46} everybody is in step with the music, all the twenty, thirty dancers are all exactly in the same movement.

Thus the patterns of our mind come together but never achieve a true coherence. There never had been any innate secure knowledge. What we take to be the case was generated by the coming together of patterns. Traditionally this is called 'dependent co-origination'. Relying on such knowledge can easily be a way of getting lost. In fact such knowledge frequently operates as subtle levels of obscuration which has to be removed. There are two aspects which need to be addressed. Firstly there is the obscuration of the afflictions or poisons, (*kleshas*), which are to be removed by the accumulation of merit. Secondly there is the obscuration of knowledge which can be purified by the accumulation of wisdom. With these two accumulations you create the basic currency which is required for gaining enlightenment. This is a path of development - you go from here to there and in general stages.

So you develop you have the basic cause but like a seed if it doesn't get the soil, if it doesn't get water, if it doesn't get sun light it's not going to grow and flourish So although you have the

buddha nature if the practises are not done and these accumulations are not done it's not going to ripped into full enlightenment. This is the view of the general Mahayana view as a vehicle of the cause. Then in terms the vehicles of the result you have those that are grouped as tantra, tantra means continuity. And so these vehicles say by acting as if you already have the result, the result will become clear for you. You're almost like you're acting into something which is already yours. So, in the tantric system the practice begins with an initiation, if you don't have the initiation generally speaking the practice is deemed to be valid. And the function of initiation is a coronation basically, and it's called *abhisheka*. *Abhisheka* in Sanskrit is the word for the kind of coronation or anointing of a prince. When a person is formally recognised as a prince they have the basis for ripening as the king. The prince needs to be anointed in order to become the king. If the prince puts the crown on his own head then he is not authentic since he lacks the blessing of the mystic third, which in Western tradition is God.

Similarly in dharma we cannot simply authenticate ourselves. We need the third, the lineage, the Other. This is the basis of a tantric initiation where the initiating guru says, "Now from *akanishta dharmadhatu*, from the highest pure land, we invite all you holy ones. Please come here! Bring your water pots with you, and give this worthy candidate a purifying bath! The candidate must formally request this purification, that is to say they have to acknowledge their limitations before they can be empowered to move beyond their limitations. There are normally four initiations but you can have many, many different stages in an initiation. With the completion of the initiation you are entitled to meditate on yourself as being the deity. If you consistently act as if you are the deity, one day you truly will be the deity because from the very beginning you have actually been the deity although you have kept forgetting that you are the deity.

So that then in the practice itself you have the visualisation that you build up on the basis of your own effort which is on the basis of the vow because you've had the initiation you are entitled to do the visualisation so that's called the vow form, the *damtsikpa*, and then you invite from the pure land the actual form of the deity the wisdom form, the *yeshepa*, and they fuse together. So again this is saying the actual which has always been there but which is obscured is going to manifest through the artificial constructed form so that the natural and the artificial merge together. And that's the fulfilment of, that's the basic structure and fulfilment of the tantric path.

Question about whether the artificial is our imagination

Yes, then in dzogchen, we say from the very beginning our mind is completely pure. If it's completely pure you don't need to purify it. If you try to purify something which is pure probably you make it dirty because why are you purifying it? You must think there is something wrong with it, so now you take your idea there's something wrong with me and you massage it into your natural purity and then you have a mess. So from the very beginning the mind is pure {13:08} don't do anything. Now everybody nowadays says we got to chill out, take it easy, yeah life's cool but actually it's very difficult to be relaxed. We are very buzzy creatures, we're full of memories, thoughts and these are not just like books that sit on a shelf until you take them off.

They operate inside the continuum of our experience as if they have a lie of their own. So these are energetic formations and we become disturbed by these energetic formations when we feel that they have something to do with us. That is to say because we are used to experiencing ourselves as constructed out of patterns of thought feelings, sensation, memory, intention, planning and so on, when these thoughts arrive we feel we need them, that they add value to our existence. Without these thoughts my life would be less complete - yeah? The basis of most love songs, I need you today anyway. I need this to make me ok, that means I'm not ok without that. Whenever you find yourself thinking or acting in this way you have to recognise that you are very far from the practice of dzogchen. This is the real test, whenever you feel you have a lack this is a sign that you are caught up in the discourse of the ego. The ego by its very nature is the terrain of lack, the ego is isolated for its own ground and so its unsecured its unstable its lost and therefore its needy and helpless and seeks more.

In that state it looks towards phenomena to make it complete - if only I had a better job, if only my children behaved better, if only I had more money, if only my bum was not so big or if only my tits were bigger, in that way then my life would be better eh? Everybody has some kind of agenda that says there's something wrong with me. This is the discourse of the ego. Dzogchen means complete, *dzogpa* means completed or finished, *chenpo* means big, and its big because this completion is inseparable from emptiness which has no beginning and no end. And we will look at in detail at emptiness tomorrow because it is again the basis of the practises around death. The mind is complete what does this mean? Everything we see, we hear, we touch is an experience it is immediately happening and then vanishing. Like we were looking at the meditation earlier, the body is full of moments of experience, arising and passing. Each of these is complete it doesn't need anything added to it, you feel something - "oh what's that? Oh it's a mosquito. "You say mosquito and now you know why your arm is itching because an insect has bit it. Knowing it is a mosquito that has bitten you what does that add? It adds access to a network of concepts for illumination. But you already have the ouch and the ouch is in the immediacy of your experience. It doesn't need an interpretation; it just is what it is ouch! It is complete.

So dzogchen is concerned with direct experience unmediated by thought conceptual elaboration or mediation, in Tibetan there are many, many words which describe this they are seen as unnecessary in the sense that they will not what they seem to be offering to do. They will not remove the lack which is embedded within the ego. People who are very, very educated who have read many, many books, who can speak many, many languages also get sad, also get lost, depressed and so on. People who are very rich get lost and sad and depressed. All the things that you think that if only you had them would make your life better are at this very moment possessed by people who are not very happy. {18:48} Clearly it's not the real antidote. The ego never gets completion because the ego is a part, the ego is completed by taking its place within the integrated structure of the mind, and again we'll look more at this over the next few days.

So in dzogchen the main focus is on relaxing our attachment, our investment, our identification with these temporary structures which are arising, and being present with the one who is aware.

Awareness and consciousness are not the same. Consciousness always takes an object, awareness reveals the consciousness and the object taken by the consciousness. As we the ego, identify consciousness, that is to say, the dualistic interactive moment of the mind being our subjectivity – me who I am. This is to take the manifestation and effulgence a radiance of energy of the mind for the mind itself and because of that, you don't experience the natural open ground of existence.

So intoxication either with the busyness and the lovely creativity of our individual intellect or with the many, many fascinating objects of the world the interplay of these two and all the many flavours and so on they generate this is a theatre of seduction. A seduction which distracts us from the natural openness of the mind itself. We can't close the theatre. No matter how much you try to be a dictator and impose total control on yourself it's never successful because we are natural born anarchists. We always slip out at night through the back door and have a little party. Nobody can control their own mind, it's impossible. The mind is undisciplined or to put it another language the mind doesn't need disciplining because it is naturally perfect. Each mode that it has is ok as it is. So if you can't be the dictator, you can't close the theatre, the show must go on something is always going to be happening so you have to find liberation *in* the moment of experience not liberation *from* the moment of experience. The resolution is not dualistic you're not going somewhere else going to have another kind of experience rather its finding yourself at home in the midst of the experience.

So on the level of interaction we have complexity beyond computation. Our lives are so complicated we can't work it all out there's always an excess there's always a lot going on. We can open to it and enjoy it and allow it to flow through us as an enriching and enlivening experience but if you try to sort it all out and package it its just anxiety provoking. So the integration of complexity of the moment into the field of radiance the unbroken field in which subject and object are always emerging and integrating this in the dharmadhatu in the infinite expanse of open awareness - this is the path of dzogchen. And it's not a path that's going from here to anywhere else because these three aspects are always integrated. It is our the emersion of the ego, which is to say the content of the mind, is so speeded up that it forgets its own ground and the effulgence, the radiance imagines it's the source. So without blocking the radiance, without trying to edit it or turning it into anything else we just relax and open to the flow of experience and gradually as we invest less and less into the patterns. The patterns become luminous and we see the emergence of the field of light within which you can speak, walk, go to work, do everything you have to do, but this is movement in the field of light. There are no entities, there are no fixed substantial objects. Everything is the movement of energy.

So if you imagine on Monday morning the alarm bell rings, you've got to get up to get to work da da da, da da da, you go through the traffic or in the underground. There are things to be done. What you are doing is organising patterns of energy. Putting your shoes on is an energetic movement, it involves tightening certain muscles, loosening other muscles. Bending, lifting, squeezing, tying then you stand up {25:01} this is a huge wave of energy there's a lot of beautiful anatomical drawings now where you can see the muscles through every stage of somebody standing up. It is energy, it is energy it is all the flow of energy. No entities were

created or harmed in the making of this movie. It's just not like that. So this is a central focus in our dzogchen practice to relax the tensing up which goes with the overburden sense that it's all up to me, to start to feel the non-duality of self and other and then through that feeling a world as an ally we work with circumstances, which doesn't mean being at the mercy of events it doesn't mean having total control over events it means you are dynamically participating in a moving field. And that movement of energy is itself the radiance of the ever open space of awareness.

So subject and object are both the radiance of the dharmakaya and that quality of interaction of subject and object is not only the radiance of the dharmakaya on a good day when you are a very nice person with holy pure thoughts. When you are in a shitty bad mood when you feel depressed and useless and stupid, when you hate your life and you hate other people - that is also the radiance of the dharmakaya. And dharmakaya is not something very high it's not very low it's not to the left or the right, it is the ground openness of all phenomena. Because it is without bias, it's not producing nice things. When I met CR Lama and one of the first things he told me was the Buddha is not a nice man. It's not about being nice, being nice is part of compassion which is about attunement it's not that you have bad thoughts you have to get rid of and good thoughts you have to get more of. Of course in terms of compassion it's better to have good thoughts than bad thoughts because your thoughts are for the benefit of the other person. But if you like on the side of wisdom, there's no difference between good thoughts and bad thoughts and when we're doing the meditation practice, the focus is on wisdom. To recognise the danger of making judgement and discrimination between good and bad thoughts. Because if you do that the basis of the judgement is a reification a solidification, this thought is bad I don't like it I shouldn't have it, this thought is good I need more of that. So you start by making a problem and then you try to solve the problem. If you don't make the problem it's just something arising and passing. And what is very interesting is, the more you allow the free flow of the mind. {28:35} whilst you're sitting on a seat and not having any guns or swords in your hand, the free flow of the mind gradually easily purifies itself and you have fewer and fewer disturbed thoughts. So you don't have to actively purify the mind because the disturbed thoughts are generated by tension as tension relaxes the thoughts get easier by themselves.

So there you can see the view of dzogchen is a bit different from the view of tantra, the view of tantra is different from the general Mahayana view which is different from the Hinayana view. So it's always very important to know what is the view that you are practicing. Which of these views is right? None. Which of these views is the best? None. In the end everything is emptiness, all views are artificial. When we really relax and open there's nothing to say it's not about concepts saying the truth therefore you can rely on concepts. These concepts like a knife and fork made out of ice. As you're using them they should be dissolving so that at the end of the meal you don't know how you ate it. Because if you build a reliance on concepts into the practice you will not be gaining access to dzogchen.

Does the logic of that make sense? So we use concepts to deconstruct the reliance on concepts and we do that in the face of our addiction to concepts. That's what makes the practice difficult to do, the practises themselves are very simple, we can learn them in five minutes. But they are

difficult to do because you have to be so close to the sticky edge of your habit, without falling in because then you're just reconfirming the habit and without being too far away because then you're in dualistic avoidance. So finding the exact middle point which is not rejecting, not merging, that is the open point which is awareness itself and on that point you have the liberation of the three root poisons ignorance/ stupidity, aversion and attachment.

So we will be focusing on that in the next few days. But now we could do just some more simple sitting. Just scanning through the body, being aware of whatever is occurring without conceptual elaboration.

Simply sitting

So we start with some simple sitting. Just allow yourself to relax and be here, be present with whatever is occurring. The main instruction is try not to fall into the experience and be carried away by it, but also not holding yourself back and observing it from a distance. Being very close just present with whatever is occurring.

The Buddhist view

So last night we looked at little bit at the context of the practice and I'd like to open up a little bit the wider context of Buddhism and its general views and show where dzogchen is located within that so it becomes clearer to see what some of its concerns are.

Buddhism is really quite a recent notion in the West there wasn't a word for Buddhism before 1817 when it was first coined in France. Before then there were little ethnographic accounts of the behaviours of certain Japanese sects and so on. It's taken a long time to have a notion that there was such a thing as Buddhism. So maybe we can see a little bit look to see how the Buddhist view of the world is very different from the Western one. We live in a materialistic society {1:10} Our education is materialistic orientated that is to say science, the paradigms of science are generally successful, so people believe that out of material, the interaction of material there is the evolution of life that you go from energy through physics to chemistry, out of chemistry you get botany you could say, then biology the evolution of simple forms then more evolved forms and so on. So the general Darwinian paradigm is victorious in general western thinking.

That has major implications in how we see the world, we see ourselves as entities, having a particular substance, particular shape which has been generated due to causes and influences in the far distant past. That is to say, the cause which have given rise to us being the way we are have nothing to do with us. That at a certain point in evolution that we move from being quadrupeds to bipeds - we stood up and that the action of standing up brought about the developments in terms of the spine, the flexibility, the development of our hands, the capacity to review the savannah around us to make judgements about space and distance and these huge

influx of information fed into the development of the brain. So all of that's very interesting but it's got nothing to do with me being me. It's a story about me so in the sense we are a kid of addendum to this historical process. We're just a blip in time, something mainly meaningless except in the harm we do to our environment.

The Buddhist's view is completely different, it says that the basis of our existence is twofold. On is a state of not knowing or ignorance that we operate in a field that we don't understand and in our operation in this world we are inseparable from the ethical dimension of being. That is to say, our actions have consequences and these consequences are the basis of our experience that each of us is experiencing the fruits of our own past actions, our own individual past action. Of course we share many features of the environment with other people, the seasons of the year, the kind of vegetation that's growing in the places where we live, but this is grounded in something about us. So the position of the individual is central each of us is the prime determining focus for the construction of our existence. This is presented as an unavoidable responsibility. Whether you are aware of karma or not, that's the deal, that's what's occurring. So if you believe you can get away with it that you can behave in an outrageous way, that won't free you from karma. For example president Assad in Syria is clearly causing a lot of misery for his people in his country, whether or not he would ever be charged in an international court with war crimes remains to be seen, many dictators escape that fate. But from Buddhist point of view, all the action she had made in terms of protecting himself at the expense of others {5:30} generate a mental formation which will lead to future constellations of pain and difficulty for him in the future. There is no way to escape your now action.

This is a view shared by most schools of Hinduism and pretty well all the schools of Buddhism. That our world is made out of activity, and the activity is governed by the kind of view we have. So if we see ourselves as a separate individual, whose primary responsibility is to increase our pleasure and diminish our own pain, and we take the view me first and we see everything that is around us as a means to an end a basic set of raw resources we can exploit and make use of, then this predatory egoistic orientation leads us into a lot of conflict, a lot of disregarding the facticity of the subjectivity of the other. That is to say if I want to make use of someone, my perception of them is determined by the use that's already in my head, I see the person and I locate them inside the matrix of my interpretation. If I saw their otherness if I saw that this is a radically different person that would stop me in my tracks, I would have to think - who is this? I'd need to become curious about how they function what their hopes and fears are, what their skills and intentions are. And that knowledge would cause then to contextualise, relativise my own intention. So if I want to exploit other people, the best way to begin it to have absolute knowledge of the other.

So we know again in dictatorship regimes there is usually a lot of definitive knowledge we know that particular ethnic group is like, we know what the status of a particular gender is and this for closer of definite knowledge leads to the annihilation of the other. Which is to say the one who has power {8:29} So karma says think carefully y about what you do. What is your intension? If you see the other as draw resource something that has no internal determinism, which can then be entirely determined by you, then having power over the other makes sense. But if you see

the other as kind of nodal point of the aliveness the subjectivity which pervades our existence as human beings, then we have to relate inter-subjectivity. Which means, your needs and my needs, need to co-exist. So that means how can I define my needs in relation to you so that I don't become exploitative of you. In European thought this was the main theme in the seventeenth century, bit earlier with people like Hobbs and Lock, thinking about democracy, or the possibility of a social being in which one doesn't exploit other people. John Stewart Mill many European philosophers have thought about how can each individual expand and express themselves, experience the fullness of their being without that being a theft of space and resources of other people or exploitation of them. European thought in relation to this tends to become theoretical and we can develop grand plans but it doesn't necessarily help you in the immediacy of the moment to work out how to situate yourself. What actually to do in the living matrix of dynamic interaction where choices have to be made very quickly.

From the Buddhist point of view karma is inseparable from the notion of time, that we don't simply have one lifetime but we are born many, many times and the form of life that we take on in each of these lives arises as the fruit of our previous action. Therefore wherever we go we encounter beings who maybe living in a very restricted form but are not essentially different from ourselves. So when you go out in the garden you might see a worm or a fly or a bird we see many different kinds of insects and beings, fundamentally they are not different from us. That is to say they have sentience, sentience means the experience of something is happening - they are experiencers. If you see a little worm and you touch it - it starts to wriggle, something is happening for that. If you go out and you put some food out then the birds come, they can smell something in the air and they drop on towards that as food. To be alive in that sense is to have experience. Experience means something is happening for me, it's good or its bad and this is how most of our lives are taken up with trying to get more good things, trying to keep the bad things away. And if we're in a bad mood we might want to make sure that when we push the bad things away that we push them onto someone else plate, because their suffering convinces us that we're happier {13:22} The look of sadness in someone else's face allows us to feel compassion but also a kind of victory. In German you have this word Schadenfreude - it describes this.

So if the other is not really other because the most basic thing about us is that we experience, the basic thing about all these other forms is that they experience then what connects us is more important than what separates us. That is to say forms of our existence are contingent, they arise due to causes and circumstances the facticity of being sentient of having experience is fundamental. The basis of this experience is the mind, so in Buddhist thought there's a lot of discussion about what is the nature of the mind. When we're busy trying to correct our experience trying to improve it and keep away difficulties we have primarily fixed on ourselves as agents. That is to say, we are able to mobilise our energy our intention towards plans which we evolve and that keeps us very busy because there's always something to be done in terms of keeping our lives going, especially nowadays when we have many new forms of media available to us messages come thick and fast. And so it's easier to spend the whole day just caught up in responding to things and being fascinated. We call it the information revolution, information means something fascinating for us especially the egos will to power and dominance feeds on

information as a sense of pseudo master. Because I know about these things it is like I have power over them and it's as if my life is interesting because I know many interesting facts. But why are they interesting? Because they protect me against boredom. What is the nature of boredom? Being stuck with myself, I can't find anything to take me out of me and I just have these old echoes zooming around inside me. {16:00}

For meditators that moment is very, very, important because it gives you a chance to think - who is the one who is experiencing boredom? But the normal orientation of our ego energy is to find some new fascinating object to displace the anxiety present in our own subjectivity. So karma as activity, actions having consequences is very much arising from our avoidance of enquiring into - who is the experiencer? What is the nature of sentience? What is the nature of awards of awareness, of presence, of being alive? Generally speaking all the different meditation techniques are ways of bringing us back from the dualistic preoccupation with the emergent patterns of energy, that is to say how I am going to get on in the world with other people, what kind of amount of money can I earn, what kind of food I eat, what kind of people I get to converse with and so on. And return us to the point where we look - who is the experiencer? What is the immediacy of contact with what is occurring?

So in Indian cosmology which Tibetan Buddhism has pretty much adopted the notion of vastness of time, millions and millions of lives sense there are many different ways we can be reborn. The upper heavens with god like beings enjoy easy access to pleasure without effort, down the jealous gods, to the humans, the animals, the hungry ghosts to the various hot and cold hells. That is to say, our existence is not just patterns of cognitive interpretation but is largely permeated by sensation and affect. When we become sick, when we have pain in our body our contact with the world tends to diminish, we want to retreat, we want to take care of ourselves. We find that the things that previously pleased us - don't please us. If you imagine the hell realm where somebody is torturing us all the time there's no space for thinking at all. So when we act in a particularly mindless or thoughtless way, in the perhaps simplistic arithmetic cultural notions of karma this is likely to lead to rebirth in a hell. So if you kill because you can't bear someone or because you want to put their skin on your feet for shoes and so on, this disregard of the potential of that other being leads to the experience of being disregarded in one's own potential, which is really what the hell realms mean. You're going, "Ow, ow, ow, help, help, help." Nobody comes.

This morning in the abattoir cows sniffing the air its not very nice and start to get a bit twitchy - nobody's listening, nobody's listening. There's a lot of killing going on nobody's listening. The great governments of the world are very aware of what is happening in Syria but for their reasons of geopolitical interpretation now is not really the time to intervene because we're not sure if we brought in more weapons maybe it would make it worse! The people are saying help, help, e say not now maybe later. Of course you may be dead but there will always be others, because there's a lot of people living in the country. There's a lot of indifference because basically we are very selfish. If we really connected with other people our world is going to change radically, we're going to be shocked - what the hell is going on, this is dreadful! Better fall asleep put the blinkers on - Monday morning back to work. So a lot of the Buddhist teaching is

to say, do you see do you see? What is this? This is terrifying, wake up. How do we wake up, what should I do, how do we try harder? There are many Buddhist paths like building stupas, building monasteries, feeding the poor and so on, there are outer paths of generating merit or a kind of excess of virtue which can then be invested in various ways. Because before you had materialistic capitalism you had spiritual capitalism which is the accumulation of merit which should be invested wisely in the Mahayana tradition. It says, if you act in a virtuous way you accumulate some merit, be very careful because you can lose it. If you try and put it in your own pocket maybe it gets lost. The best thing to do is invest it in other people, so at the end of your practice we say, may all sentient beings be happy, I share my merit with them. Now your merit is invested in all these people and they have a debt of obligation to you. This is a very important system which again its designed to say, don't sit in the notion of being an individual entity, it's the isolation of the sense of an ego self which in all the schools of Buddhism is seen as the prime problem - the forgetfulness of connection. The connection with the environment and the connection with one's basic own state of being. In the forgetfulness of the ground of being there is a simultaneous forgetfulness of the context of existence. So these two are resolved in the same point in the meditation practice.

What is death?

What is death? Clearly death is the ending of something, we have life and then something which is living dies. If we construe our life as the content of our existence the patterning of our existence, then my life is constituted out of my memories, my qualities, my capacities, my network of friends and relations, that is to say people who operate as pathways for the confirmation of the value of my existence. Death is the ending of that patterning, of the social interactive patterning and the intra-psychic patterning as we forget our situation. So if when we want to punish people we send them to prison that cuts them off from their pattern of social interaction. And we really want to punish them we put them in social isolation cells so they can't relate to anything except the content of their own mind, which for most people is really a punishment. Then of course we have conditions where we gradually lose contact even with the content of our mind. So severe states of Alzheimer's for example are a kind of living death, because the person living with someone with Alzheimer's is having to relate to somebody who is no longer who they were. There is a vanishing away of what we took to be that person. {1:56} because we come into being in a performative way, we demonstrate the marvellous richness of the texture of knowledge and our competence. We are all that we have evolved like a flower starting to bloom, but when that flower then starts to collapse there is an ebbing away of the person.

So in the sense that we feel ourselves to be people - we are human beings, to die is to lose our humanity, we are no longer fully in touch with this range of skills and qualities that made us ourselves. This then is something very tragic. If we believe there is nothing after death, it's sad because there is a great loss but there's no fear that something worse might be happening. From the Buddhist point of view there's the hope of the continuity to get something better but also too of course the fear of course that you might get something worse. Who or what is it that

would move from one life to another? This is a very central question because, we have wild flowers like daffodils and they come up from the bulb from a certain time of the year, they blossom and then they start to die and then the energy goes back down into the bulb, and the bulb survives for some years - coming up - going back, coming up - going back. So we have the notion that there is a kind of basic seed potential which can show and not show, show and not show. Perhaps it's something like that, some theories say that. But what could this bulb be, what could this core essence of a human being be? Well, of course from a Buddhist point of view there is no core essence to being human. Being human is a pattern in your next life you could be born as a dog or a frog, or a worm or a god. Because these are patterns of energy manifestation. There is no substance to them they don't have a fixed shaping which allows them to be what they are. Nor do they have an individual defining essence.

So the general view is when we die the potential that we have goes back into its most basic form and that form is space. This is where, the Buddhist view particularly dzogchen view differs radically from a western materialist point of view. The basis of our existence {5:10} is what is called in Tibetan *rigtong* which means awareness and emptiness inseparable. And I will explain emptiness in a while, means that emptiness here that we see a space is inseparable from the lucidity of our awareness. That is to say our being aware, being present is not something generated out of a materialistic basis like chemical changes in the brain. It exists prior to any manifestation of phenomena it an absolute given of existence. {5.56} awareness and space are inseparable. So Sanskrit language, Tibetan language have huge numbers of words that describe this, the *dharmadhatu*, *dharmakaya*, *dharmata* these three central terms all mean about the same, *dharmadhatu* is the space of existence within which the *dharmakaya* is the fulfilled presence within that space. And *dharmata* is the actuality or precision of presence as it encounters the world of phenomena.

So as we move into the death process the outer forms of our existence start to just gradually subside back into each other, just as you can see the daffodils starting to fade back at this time of the year. The earth element starts to collapse back into the water element, the water element into fire, the fire into wind and the wind into space. That's a kind of metaphorical way of describing the closing down of the movement of expansion which is life, and we go into a state of nothing happening. Nothing happening means, the dynamic interaction of subject and object which can also happen inter psychically in terms of our internal mental dialogue - that dualistic or dialogic conversation which is how we experience ourselves to be humans because our existence is primarily one of communication, that gradually goes into caseation. The final dissolving of the wind element which is the basic movement between subject and object settle down. And like a very still calm day, it's as if nothing is happening. But your still there because awareness is prime, primal, primordial - there from the very beginning it is not generated by movement. Consciousness is generated by movement.

That is to say we hear as sound and our ear consciousness - the hearing consciousness is evoked, the sound and the consciousness arise together they interact and that's the moment of experience. Then we smell something, it's the same. Something passing in the air comes to our

nostrils and evokes the arising of the consciousness of smell. This is communication, interaction. But awareness is not interaction with anything.

As many of you know well, the traditional sample of this is the mirror. The mirror is not influenced by what it shows. You put something, say you put a bunch of flowers in front of the mirror immediately the reflection of the flowers is there in the mirror. If you then remove the bunch of flowers something else will be there, something else will be there. The mirror is showing the flowers but it's not actively engaged with the flowers. However when we see the flowers we think about the flowers. We think about the colours, the shapes, where they might come from what they might cost how they are raised in a hothouse and so on. Many, many thoughts arise for us as human beings. We have very busy minds. This is consciousness taking an object. So something is going on - this is how we know we are alive. When this goes down and nothing's happening it's as if there is death because nothing is going on. We are still here, that is to say I know nothing is going on. Now the basic experience that nothing is going on is not very tasty, but we have in our pocket many different spices so we then make a comment on the fact that nothing is happening and then we are into a very delicious dish which we can theorise about what is the nature of the non-existence of the self. And you can write a PhD thesis on that.

So this is what happens all the time the desire to move from the open space which is passive receptive but also has the potential to show and reveal everything into the active involvement in whatever is occurring. From the point of dzogchen this is not an either or these are not two different forces, it's not that we are saying that manifestation is bad and stillness and emptiness is good. It's that when there is the intoxication with the movement of involvement there is a forgetfulness of the ground state of emptiness and so it feels like death, it feels like the end. Indeed it is the end of this particular pattern of manifestation but since we have each been born we have each experienced many, many patterns. Many of these patterns are dead, they are gone for good. Our youth is gone, it's not coming back - all the things you could do when you were young are dead for you. You can experience them at a second level through children or grandchildren, you can delight in young children running around and playing and laughing. But if someone asks you to get up and do that, as the years go by you have less and less interest "no. No you go and have fun, I'll sit here".

So in that way we can see we have already experienced many kinds of death. We had the death of a particular kind of innocence when you come into puberty and you become more aware of changes in your body and sexuality. {12.54} and you start to see the world in a very different way. Of course some children have some kind of sexual sense but it's, there's kind of a gap in it it's not quite connected and then in puberty when the hormones come on and start this interactive communication suddenly the world is much more difficult, much more complicated. So that period is one of great loss because now most teenagers become quite self-conscious. How will I be? You suddenly think people are thinking of me in this other way, do they like me? Do they find me attractive? Do they want to be close to me? When kids are seven and eight years of age they are not thinking about that very much at all they're just running around.

So if you think back to all of these stages of loss. When the baby is separated from the mothers breast, when the baby is taken to sleep in its own cot, these are death of particular moments. Something has ended forever, it's not coming back. But because of our fixation of thinking of the continuity of ourselves we edit the story of our lives to privilege the seamless movement of me majestically moving through time and space. When I fact it's been more of a bumpy journey and we've lost lot along the way. We tend to not want to pay attention to that loss. What does it mean if you lose something? I was reading recently of how at the end of the world - the world here we go - how at the end of the war, which was the end of the world for many people, many German people who had been living in the East had to come back. And when they came into Germany people were not very interested in their story. I don't know what that was true but that was what I was reading about. They had lost everything the land, houses and other people think we have lost something too so shut up. And so something that was terrible for many people gets kind of - has to be held inside.

So a lot of the time in order to survive with other people we have to pretend that life is ok. Nobody is very interested in our pains, and losses and frustrations. And this can help us to be forgetful of the fact of our suffering. What does suffering mean? It means that, how I want things to be is something I often don't get. The Buddha set it out very simply in terms of two propositions, suffering is not getting what you do want and getting what you don't want. This means that our intelligence, our imagination, our creativity can formulate all sorts of plans about places about identity, about how we imagine our health both mental and physical and so is going to be, but these plans are not determining how our life actually is. So we miss out on many things that we might have thought we would have. We enter into an activity thinking it's going to be good and virtuous and then we find it's very complicated. If you teach in a university or you work in a hospitals and places like that or you become a school teacher and think you really want to help people then after a while you think this is nothing but politic, nothing but back stabbing and agendas and criticism and people playing games of power. Life in these environments is often very, very difficult. It's not what we thought it would be.

So the loss of dreams, the loss of our hopes and fantasy's the loss of our projections is also a kind of death. So from the Buddhist point of view they say, the more attached you are in your vision of the world and your vision of yourself the more death will be difficult because you hit the buffers. Your fully formed plan remains invested and therefore dissolving feels like badness, you're being forced to relinquish something you want to hang onto. So from the Buddhist point of view we spend a lot of time thinking about letting go, we think about impermanence, the changing of the seasons, we think about going to sleep at night the ending of the day, we think about eating and digestion - that each moment is present and then gone, present and then gone and that the dissolving of life is essential for the manifesting of life because we couldn't have this moment if the past moment hadn't vanished. Each moment has its truth or its presence or its impact then its gone. Trying to cling onto the moment and shape it according to our plans involves many problematic factors. One is that we are ignoring all the other potentials of the situation and we are aligning ourselves to the notion of efficacy and mastery that we should be able to make things happen on our terms. {18:50} That is manifestly untrue when we reflect on our actual experience. We are actually working with circumstances, we have to be flexible

and accommodate which moment by moment means we are having to drop things that we would have like to be the case. Letting go is essential for staying in contact with the next moment because if you import your plan into the current situation you tend to bang into it. Because the typology, the contouring of each moment is particular. And so if we come into a meeting with a strong agenda of what we want to say we often find that the mood of the meeting is not very receptive to that. So do we speak our truth and bomb into other people? Or do we receive the ambience of the meeting, do we get in touch with what is actual potential and then work with that? This is a central choice since from the Buddhist point of view, it's always good to let go. Letting go of the fixed plan the fixed idea means that you can stay in relation to what is going on and what is going on is all there ever is, because what's going on is the meeting place of the object field and the subject field. But if you go into your head and formulate your plan then the inner mental world is being separated from the phenomenological field and re-entry can be difficult. Because it's very easy then to enter into judgement and say, "ah, these people are too stupid, what's the point of talking they wouldn't understand bla, blah, blah." Some self-referential comfort and self-justification as you slip further and further away from the possibility of contact.

In the Buddhist view, contact is vital because contact is the quality of non-duality. Non-duality means there is no clear or fixed wall between self and other. So if we were trying to sort things out inside ourselves we're abandoning the field of experience and therefore we enter a domain of alienation. And it's that private sense of self which can experience itself as the organiser, the determiner of experience. Whereas if you participate in the field of experience as it arises you in case flexibility you increase opens to a wider sense of experience and in relation to death, most importantly you experience directly the impermanence of all experience.

That is to say, when we are alive there is nothing to cling to. Since we woke up this morning we've had many, many experiences, nobody can keep them. We ceaselessly are having more experience. Of course it helps if you leave here on Sunday and you go home, it really helps if somebody hasn't broken into your house. That's very nice, you put the key in the lock and it still opens the door and you think this is my house, that's quite reassuring. We're not talking about some mad cacophony a kind of existence without any patterns. Patterns ceaselessly manifest and come and go - but they come and go. So we have here seemingly a kind of dialectical move between patterning which involves some potential for diction. That is to say, I will go to the airport in Sunday evening and I hope that the plane will be there. I organise myself in relation to a fantasy of time because today is Friday morning, I believe there will be a Sunday, I believe there will an airport in Cologne, I believe my body will be in that airport and the plane will be there and I will be on the plane. {23:47} These are all beliefs so I don't know if they are true but I'm going to organise my time and movement in relation to that.

So its not that everything just becomes a mad chaos, its rather to see the movement to Friday to Sunday is one of moment by moment freshness, it's not that you can completely restructure the whole of existence but how you participate that's where we have the choice, whether we try to focus on the repetition of our familiar patterns or whether we stay open to interactions with people and there are a lot of people her so you can have many different interaction. What is it

like talking to different people? How can you bring yourself forward? That some people are easier to talk to than others - for you. So what does that mean? And start to experience directly, my being myself which is actually my becoming myself in this particular environment is always dynamic. I come into myself through my interaction with you. It's not that there's some essence inside me, some individual factory that is pumping me out, but rather through my participation through the shared experiential field, the field of non-duality I find myself speaking in this way. I find myself sitting in this way, so in that sense we are revealed to ourselves through the process of participation.

Ok, so who are we being revealed to? This is awareness. Awareness has no form, no colour, no shape its ungraspable. Who is being revealed to awareness? Ourselves as we manifest, how we are speaking in the moment, how our body is, sensation in the body, perception of other people, what we see in their face and so on. Subject and object is revealed to awareness, revealed through awareness, revealed as the energy of awareness.

Awareness is not a part from and looking at something, when the reflection arises in the mirror it's in the mirror. So awareness doesn't mean some higher quality substance some transcended essence which is up there somewhere which we have to ascend through various stages to get to. We are already aware, awareness is the bedrock it's the ground of our existence but you can't catch it. It's not a thing. It generates the experience of transient moments of light, colour, shape, smell, thought, feeling, sensation and so on. And it also generates its own shadow which is the absence of awareness. That is to say, we can ignore awareness - who is the one who ignores awareness? This is the energy of awareness.

So a thought arises - "well I'm just me I don't know why James is talking all this shite, I'm just me, I'm getting on with my life, I've got a job, I've got kids, I've got responsibilities, this is just me. Leave me alone. What's all this talk for?" Somebody can say that. Who is saying that? Who is saying that? A person - what is a person? A person is energy, they are making a statement about themselves, because they know this they plan this. These are all movement of energy. So energy in patterning itself sets up a kind of vibration which creates the sense of something being strongly real there. A traditional example of this is, if on a dark night you have a fire and you take a burning stick out of the fire and you turn it around your head you see a circle of fire. There is no circle of fire but you see the circle of fire created by the rapidity of the movement of your hand. If you slow your hand down you start to see a stick is moving and you speed it up and there's a circle of fire. {28:52} So it's the rapidity of the movement of thought, feeling, perception and so on that generates this kind of epiphenomena of I, me, myself am truly existing. And so in meditation we are always trying to slow things down a little bit so that we can see, a bit like in a cinema you can start to see the frames rather than being caught up in the whole movie. It doesn't mean of course that nothing is going on, the still movies going on but now you start to recognise it's a move. And if it's a movie, we don't invest it with too much significance and importance.

So, this takes us back to the question of who dies? From the point of view of dzogchen it is the process of the relaxing of the patterning of our particular existence that allows the dissolving

away, and so this form ceases to exist. And then new experience arises and what we take to be a new experience arises. If we can recognise in the moment of the dissolving that it's not that you go from something to nothing at all in a nihilistic sense but you go from a somewhat intoxicating, mesmerising, entrancing flow of engaged experience to just being present. Mind is open and present and then again on that empty stage some new production starts some new theatre of karma, some impulse arises and on the basis of that impulse new formations start to manifest and then another life occurs. We will look at this in a bit more detail. So dying is simply the expression returning to its source and then there will be a re expression and then that expression will return to its source. The possibility is to see the relationship between the source and the expression - the ground and what manifests. The difference between what's called samsara which means the impossibility of escaping an eternal round of birth and death, birth and death, being trapped inside the fixation on phenomena on what is manifest. And nirvana which is peace which is the absence of that enmeshment. The difference is simply whether the source or the ground is recognised.

The ground according to the Buddhist tradition is mind which is not a substance not a thing. Our mind is naked its fresh, it's not requiring anything, it's free of lack. Inside that many experiences arise, some we call the subject, some we call the object. When you imagine that you are the subject, this is all you are, then forgetfulness of the ground is your own direct experience but it's also be validated by the culture. Some traditions, theistic traditions might say, children are a blessing from god, they are god's gift. And so they've come from god but of course god is very far away. God has a good postal service, package hopefully arrives in tact with no damage but its difficult to get back to god. From the Buddhist point of view the ground of experience is not something far away, it's not something historical, it is immediate here and now. So the ground the ground and the field of experience and the moments of experience, these three are inseparable. If these three are recognised they become called the three kayas, *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya* that is to say, they are the fulfilment of enlightened being. Because the *dharmakaya* is the ungraspable openness, the *sambhogakaya* is the richness of the non-dual field of experience which never changes and *nirmanakaya* is our moment by moment participation out of this field of experience but at the same time within it. That is to say, in being our individual selves there is no tear or separation between us and what's occurring.

So there you have the non-duality of the individual and the field of experience and between the field of experience and the ground of experience. So this is the basic overarching context of how Buddhism construes what a human life is. So being alive as a human being is seen as a tremendous opportunity because of all the different ways of manifestation we have the greatest opportunity to have experiences the widest range of experiences and to reflect on the nature of that experience. If you are a bird you can fly in the sky, and you will see things that we all never see but as far as we know birds can't really reflect on that they don't have a formulate language. We have language which allows us to investigate the illusions which bind us. So being set reflective is a good basis for sorting to see the need for meditation, when we start to see that actually how we make sense of the world, how we construe it is the basis of our own misery. Because we take ourselves to be something that we are not. We take ourselves to be a thing, an

entity, a monad, an isolated phenomena whose existing with a gap between ourselves and other people.

So the fundamental line of Buddhist enquiry is to look - what is the difference between me, myself and other people? And what is the difference between manifestation and the ground of manifestation? And this is why we do the meditation to really see this so that dying is not an unusual experience at all. Letting go of this form leads to rebirth. It's not the same as in the Christian notion of that when we die we live in hope of the resurrection, on the basis of the promise made by someone two thousand years ago. It's not faith based because faith is very weak it's based directly on experience, so meditation is different from prayer. In prayer we tend to repeat statements about the world, we stay what we take to be the case, what we believe but in meditation we're relaxing our investment on cognitive structures to perceive directly, immediately in this moment so that we taste for ourselves what is actually the case. Then we're not dependent on what other people say, on whether other people think it's true or not true but we ourselves have definite knowledge and that definite knowledge means that death is not fearful at all.

On Refuge and bodhicitta

Now recite the refuge and bodhicitta. The reason we do this is because it gives an orientation, it gives us a sense that we are not alone that there is protection or refuge available. On the outer form this protection or refuge is seen as being embodied in the Buddha, the Buddha's teaching - the dharma and the assembly of those who follow the Buddha. There are many different layers of refuge. In dzogchen we are particularly concerned with how to take refuge in our own true nature, the ground of our being which we have lost contact with. The ego itself is always very vulnerable and bravely take on many tasks which it can't fulfil and so a lot of pain is generated through life through failure. That we try our best but it doesn't work out. A lot of the time that is because people don't know how to have allies. I certainly see this a lot on the field of psychotherapy that many of the patients who really suffer are very, very isolated. They don't trust that anyone can help them which is a profound negative belief that leads to isolation and even when help is given because of their commitment to their belief that they can't be helped they spend a lot of time sabotaging the help that is given to them - this is very, very tragic. The idea that actually if we are a little careful we can find many good allies in the world. We can find many benign supportive, responsive situations in which we can flourish but we have to be careful in looking for that.

And so, taking refuge is linked with the development of discernment. Now discernment is a very dynamic quality it has to be applied moment by moment. If you develop a fixed belief life in some ways is simpler because you can say, everyone is beautiful - I love everyone. That's very nice, very straightforward and very stupid, because people are not very nice and you're going to get hurt {3:06} if on the other hand you say, everyone is shit I don't trust people at all they are all very dangerous - that's also very simple but it's also very stupid, because some people are actually quite good. But if you practice discernment now you've got to work out whose good.

Now, some people are good on Monday but bad on Tuesday (laughter) some people are good in the morning and bad in the evening and it can flip even quicker than that. So what it means is, if we want to work with the world we have to be attentive moment by moment. If you want to work with situation because of the impermanent structure of whatever is manifesting you have to be present - there is no other way. This requires quite a lot of effort both to drop our habitual fantasising which takes us off into mental worlds and away from what's actually happening and also the effort to maintain attention. At first that feels like a huge gathering together of all our resources because we are very used to fragmentation, to dispersal to distraction.

So being present with what is here, quickly evaluating the potential of the structure in this particular moment, and then fine-tuning how you're going to respond to it that's quite a skilled operation. In order to do that we take refuge. Refuge means we believe someone knows how to do it, someone somewhere knows how to do it. That person is called the Buddha. Now because we believe the Buddha knows how to do it we feel - we can make it too. Luckily we don't get to meet the Buddha very often so we can't prove whether he really knows how to do it or not so you could say it's a kind of placebo effect, a kind of reassuring fantasy. But of course if you have no hope you're not going to make much progress. So Buddhism like all religions has quite a strong emphasis on hope and faith. Not particularly that you believe in particular propositions but rather faith as a state of open heartedness because if we are not open toward the environment we can't see the environment and our tendency to interpret the world through projecting onto the environment, our familiar beliefs are likely to remain very strong.

So when we say I take refuge in the Buddha - it means all beings have buddha nature so remembering the good qualities of the Buddha, I remember the good qualities of the buddha nature of all beings so whatever judgments I make about a person, I like them, I don't like them and so on, this is just on the surface. Basically the heart of the beings we encounter is good. So why am I turning myself away from some people and turning more toward other people. Two aspects here, it may be how I am energetically constructed at the moment and how someone else is energetically patterned just doesn't fit. So the question then is how to protect yourself from non-alignment of energy without making a fundamental rejection about the other person? So that we - compassion is that we are careful for ourselves and careful for other people in the precise detail without entering into the judgement of the other person is good or bad. Just because we like someone doesn't make them good. Just because we don't like someone doesn't make them bad.

The buddha nature itself, is open, fresh in the dualistic sense its neither good nor bad. Each human being exists as a potential but moment by moment we constellate with them and either there's a lot of pathway between us or the pathway is blocked. And if the pathways a bit blocked it may be better to go separate. So taking refuge in the Buddha means fundamentally not reacting other beings but also being skilful in interaction with other beings and that what studying the dharma helps us to do. And the sangha gives us a group people who we can interact with and practice with, because one of the advantages of being in a situation like this is that we are all trying to be more present and more aware and that helps us perhaps fine tune

our interaction with other people. And also to speak more openly about our experiences just to try to enquire and understand.

And the second part is the bodhisattva orientation that we will mobilise whatever resources we have for the benefit of others. Why do we do that? Because A, it's a good thing to be kind and generous, B, on a deep level there is no real separation between self and other and from the point of view of the higher tantras and dzogchen actually we don't need very much. It's said in the tradition that recognising your own nature, being at home in your own nature, realising or actualising the dharmakaya this is for ourselves this is the ground of our satisfaction, our contentment. From this we manifest the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya, we manifest our presence in the world and our being with others for the sake of the other. This is very different orientation - it means that as an individual in being grounded in awareness there isn't an ego hunger, there isn't a lack inside that we're looking for other people to fulfil because we are satisfied. And therefore the energy can be manifest in terms of benefiting the entire experiential field. { 10:34} In order to benefit other people, you first have to benefit yourself. That benefiting yourself is not a case of pulling in lots of resources for yourself but of seeing your own nature, resting in it, deeply relaxing in it and seeing that the various preoccupations of life are not so important. If things at work go well, they go well. If things at work go badly they go badly. If plans are fulfilled - good, if they are not fulfilled - good. It's about not taking life too seriously and from the Buddhist, particularly the dzogchen point of view this is very, very profound because we are addicted to activity. We are addicted to improving the structures of the world. The whole modernist drive of western civilisation is out with the old on with the new. And so on a daily basis we are losing languages throughout the world, we are losing cultural patterns, we're losing botanical species, we're losing all kind of creatures because we are marching into this brave new world in which information will be done through our fingertips and the rest of it, I saw it advertised in the airport - so it must be true (laughter). This is the future. Instant communication, what shall we be communicating? Nonsense, that's what most of our human communication is - but at least we will be able to do it very quickly! (laughter).

So from this Buddhist point of view it's the hunger, or as it's described, grasping or thirst, an insatiable quality I need more in order to be complete, when that's installed in us it's very difficult to fulfil the bodhisattva vow. The bodhisattva is a person, or it could be any kind of creature who develops the orientation, I want to work for the benefit of all. All includes ourselves, but I want to work for the benefit of all, universal liberation. But if we have a subtext, if we've got an agenda - I want to do this so other people will think I'm a good person, I want to do this so my mother will be pleased with me, I want to do this in order that I feel safe and secure, then the self-referential turn in that is going to create a distorting movement. So in a sense the real bodhisattva path begins with understanding our own nature because then, you are free to use all your resources for the benefit of others. And you're not going to be subverting and perverting the path through introducing selfish concerns under the pretext of being altruistic.

So we recite these verses together, we do it three times, we do it quite slowly. This allows us to adjust our breathing into long slow breathes, to experience ourselves making sound, the sound

arises with the breath which is ungraspable creating vibrations in the throat which send out these vibrations of sound, which are arising and passing, raising and passing. So as we're reciting this the words are quite meaningful but we're also resting in the embodied experience of the transient nature of our existence. And then when we finish on the third recitation we just sit quietly for some time.

Emptiness

So, in the Buddhist tradition we have various kind of practices that we do and we do them again and again and again as a way of antidoting the tendencies which are deeply embedded within us. It's very difficult to catch the mind in operation particularly the habitual interpretive patterns that we have because they are automatic and they are believed. So first of all we have to have a critique to undermined our belief in the basic assumptions that we organise our life according to. But then we have to have a practice to bring about a disinvestment in these habitual practices which have become seemingly just how life is. And a key way of doing this is looking at the nature of emptiness.

So here we are in this room we look around and we see many different people. We know what a human being looks like and most people here look like human beings, so we see two eyes, ears, nose and so on and we think "oh that's a person" and then we maybe speak to them and say what is your name? Tell me about yourself, then they start to tell us something and we build up some kind of image of who they are. Who they are is information organised according to the principle - they must be somebody. Everybody is somebody - so who are you? The somebodyness of the person is a prior assumption, that is to say, there's an essence to the person. There is something about that person that makes them that person and nobody else. That is to say, we take man beings to be internally defined to be somebody in themselves. To have a self-substance a kind of concrete internally defining substance or thingness which is what they are. So when we meet people re-evaluate people according to our criteria in the same way we would evaluate apples or the taste of wine. We develop a template of I like this, I don't like that. So a person has certain qualities. I don't like it when you talk in that way. I really like it when you're very helpful. We're saying that each person has a range of qualities, some we might call good, some we might call bad - but there is a person who has qualities in the way we say in grammar that a noun can be linked with an adjectives or adverb. We can say something about the bus, the bus goes quickly, we can say the red bus goes quickly, the beautiful red bus goes quickly. At the heart of that there is a bus. If you don't have a bus then these other qualifications and medications don't have any meaning. So the noun is the key thing, that there is some entity there a substance which exists and then you stand in relation to it as it is revealed through its qualities. {4:33} I think that is our normal way of proceeding.

From the Buddhist point of view there are no nouns, there are no self-existing phenomena, what there are processes which we can appropriate, we can take in the manner of there being a thing. For example, I came from London, London as a name seems to stand for a particular place but when you get to London where is the most London bit of London? Maybe the London museum

because you get most of the history of London or you go to a fish and chip shop or you go to a pub. So what is the London ness of London? Clearly there are many different London's. People who live in London usually only really know a very small part of London because you couldn't spend your time just travelling around to know what London is. There's probably nobody who has gone down every street in London. So we take it for granted that something called London exists, what it exists as is a potential. A potential which reveals itself through our participation. If you go to London you can experience London, but actually what you experience is your bit of London. You have your experience of London because there isn't a London ness that you could somehow get the whole of.

The same principle applies to people. When we meet someone we get our take on them our sense of them and we can build up more and more of an elaborated picture of who that person is but there are many aspects of that person that will not be revealed to us. There are aspects of what people reveal to us when they are sick, when their having sex, when they're in the toilet. We don't necessarily have access to these different aspects of the person. Even if you become close to someone and you sleep with them - you only have your experience of their sexuality, if they sleep with someone else they may reveal their sexuality in a different way. So in that sense, knowledge of the object cannot be separated from the nature of the subject who is having the knowledge. {7:24} This is a fundamental Buddhist approach you see in Nagarjuna's philosophy, that there are no self-existing entities in the world, the world is revealed to us through our participation that we are interpreting the world and one of the ways which we simply that process of interpretation is to project the sense that there are truly existing entities out there and also that we are a truly existing entity.

Now you might see the implications of this for the topic of death because if we truly exist then our death becomes the ending of something which was really there. It was there and then it was not there. The Buddhist view would say, if you enquire into any object that you find, you will not find an essence, you will find a coming together, a juxtaposition, a meeting, a conglomeration of various factors which create the sense that something is there but there is no essence to it. So, what you have is patterns which we imagine or impute to be the indicators of essences but the essence is something that our mind adds into the situation which is simply the process of a pattern.

As we were looking earlier our own lives have changed very much over the years, we were once small babies then we gradually got bigger, then we went to school, www had different kind of experience. Probably at school we played different kind of sports that we quite possibly don't play now. We had to do homework and learnt many, many things that we by now have forgotten. In the process of our lives we have been shaped by many circumstances. What is the essence of ourselves? Is it the kind of music we like, the kind of novels we like to read, our favourite place in the world, the kind of clothes we like to wear? Do these things truly define who we are? Since we haven't always listened to that kind of music or visited those kinds of paces or eaten that kind of food, or worn these kinds of clothes all we can say is that perhaps these factors, these features define who we are now. {10:28} Other things can change in our life and then we might radically alter all of these.

So what we have is a kind of blindness and over investment of the current situation as if it were definitive or demonstrative of who we actually are. But what is our current situation constructed of? We might have a job - we might not have a job. If we have a job it's a job we applied for probably through an interview process and if you get the job you're inside a particular system, you were allowed to be accepted into that system. You're having a job is dependent on your schooling, your qualifications your success in the interview and you're not turning up at work drunk every morning. So it's being maintained by many, many different factors. It's not a thing in itself. Somebody might say, I'm a lawyer, I'm a schoolteacher, these are process descriptions. If you are a lawyer and you have no clients you will not be a lawyer for very long because you have to pay the rent of your rooms and so on. So law is something that you do, teaching is something that you do, these are all performative they are descriptions of embodied activity moving in the world with others. But when we say this person's a lawyer, this person's a doctor the way that we hear that seems to imply that there is some doctor ness to the doctor, some lawyer ness to the lawyer.

This is an illusion. This is an imputation of an internal defining essence to a phenomena which is emerging as part of the general phenomenological field. That is to say, you became a lawyer because of all sorts of reasons, the kind of school you went to, the kind of teachers you got, the kind of encouragement or non-encouragement of your parents, whether you have a mind which can absorb a lot of fairly abstract historical law situations, whether that takes your fancy, whether one of your ambitious you might know that lawyers can make quite a lot of money. Some people decide that the long-term gain of getting all the money is enough to keep their mind in an anaesthetised state as they absorb the lessons of law. I know many young people who study law and I hear from them how mind-boggling awful it is. It's the same for becoming a psychologist, psychologist have to learn a lot of historical research most of which is very hideous, they have to learn a lot of statistics which they never wanted. They think that by becoming a psychologist they'll learn about human beings. So in that way we have a fantasy about how somethings going to be and then we march through the shit mile after mile after mile to get to the holy land to find out that it's not what we thought it would be. And part of that is because we imagine something, we imagine something in the future.

In the same way we imagine that we truly exist, we imagine that this building truly exists in itself. This building exists because there is enough money coming in to pay the cost for it. If that money doesn't come in the building would have to be sold off. Linked to this building are other Buddhist centres {14:42} elsewhere in Germany. If they do not generate enough money it is hard to pay to keep them all functioning. We say this is a Buddhist centre but it's only a Buddhist centre because there are Buddhists. And why are people Buddhist? There are many, many things that influence that, some people become Buddhist and will remain so until they die, some people are Buddhist for five years, or three years or two years. Or they are Buddhist as long as their teachers alive and their teacher dies and they go off and do something else. Most European countries have many churches which are closing because people don't identify themselves as Christian so strongly and they don't want to give so much money to the church.

So Christianity, seems to exist but Christianity exists as a participative subject, if everybody stops being Christian there will still be historians who will be historians of Christianity, someone will always be able to make a profit on anything. But Christianity as a living substance exists in departments of theology, in departments of history of religion, theological training colleges, the work with parishioners in a place like this. Again it is performative it is something that we do. That is to say we move through space and time, we are revealed through space and time, what is the nature of the revelation? It is just revelation. It is a revelation in the same way that when you look in the mirror what is revealed is a reflection. The reflection has neither essence nor substance, there is nothing to catch in a reflection and the reflection itself has no definition you have to interpret what a reflection is. It doesn't announce itself as anything other than shape and colour. that's all it is shape and colour. You look at yourself and you think "Ahhhhh - not so good - more facecream " you do that because you see yourself but it's not your reflection in the mirror. The fact that you see your reflection in the mirror is your ability to interpret shape and colour. Because your very good at interpreting that shape and colour as being you - you think that's me. But that is not you - that is a reflection which has no substance to it.

That is why a mirror is used a lot as an example because when we look around this room we see many things and these objects that we see we see as outside there so there in the middle of the room on the wall there is a state of the Buddha. The Buddha is sitting there very peacefully - this is the Buddha. But of course this is not the Buddha, this is a statue of the Buddha. But in this place when people come in very often they make prostrations to the Buddha. Why would you prostrate to a statue? Because this is the Buddha. No - it's a state of the Buddha. But this statue has something stuffed up underneath him, inside the buddha there are many holy things that make this the Buddha. Now Christians have been through this process, the whole iconostasis decisions made in the eleventh century generally speaking the western church, the Roman Catholic church decided to get rid of icons and the orthodox churches kept them. The icon is not just a representation of something but it is the actual present itself{18:54} So the Catholic church decided it is the Eucharist - the holy mass in which you have the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine into the flesh and the blood of Jesus Christ - this is the actual thing to be worshipped and it's a special moment officiated by a priest. The icon is not the thing itself only the moment of the Eucharist is the thing itself. Which is good way of seeking employment for the priests because if you go into an orthodox church you yourself can kiss the icon and do it ally yourself you don't need the priest to put holy water on your head.

This is the human life isn't it - power games of inclusion and exclusion. The central point is though, when you see the buddha statue if you feel really Buddhist then you make long prostrations because this is the Buddha. Or you can see this is a statue of the Buddha, or if you're a fundamentalist Christian you say this is a demon, this is going to drive people mad, this is completely leading people in a false direction. St Francis Xavier wrote a long detailed letter to St Ignatius Loyola this early Jesuit describing how the Buddha is in fact a real demon and what - very interesting early theology - Francis Xavier which was current in the early thinking at that time, when he went to Japan he thought that somehow the blessing of Jesus Christ had arrived in Japan and at one time these people were pure Christians but over time their good Christian understanding had been corrupted so that there were just trace elements of it in this demonic

Buddhist faith. Because these Buddhists they also do purification, they ring bells and they light candles and they bow and they have ceremonies of offering food and so on. So he said these people are like demon perverters of the Christian doctrine so they need a very strong treatment.

What is all of that? it is interpretation, that is to say, someone lives inside a paradigm they have a particular heuristic a particular interpretive structure and what they encounter, they pull into their interpretive structure and make sense of it in terms of what they know. This is our normal way of proceeding. So the idea that the statue is the Buddha is something that Buddhists take up. The statue is not the Buddha at all, without the construct of the Buddha it's not the state of the buddha. It's something, something which people have put gold paint onto. But even if we say gold paint that is also a term. If we say his hair is blue in colour, that's also an interpretation. The fundamental point here is - whether there is a world that exists separate from you, you have no access to it. The only world you will ever have is the world in which you are a part. Our world is interpreted, that is to say in another way of speaking, everything is the mind. The mind sees, hears, touches, tastes, remembers, knows different languages, learns philosophy and history -all of this is the energy, or the movement or the process of the mind. And everything we see comes to us through the mind. We don't have access to something outside ourselves.

So if I lift this object in my hand its very obvious it's a glass of water, it's obvious to us because we have the interpretative structure of understanding this is a glass of water. We know what this is, we see what we know. There is clearly an intercourse or a dialogue between the perceptual phenomena because we can't say it's just the mind (James taps the glass) there is a sense that there is something there, but whatever this is experience. So if I say I will prove that this is not just the mind because (James taps the glass again) clearly one thing is hitting another thing (hits the glass again). Now we hear that and say - James is banging a piece of glass against another piece of glass so it goes ting, ting, ting. {24:06} That's your mind. You cannot get out of your mind. Of course some people take drugs just to get out of their minds but in the end you come back to interpretation. Our world is a process of mental activity, mental activity. So therefore on a general or relative level the content of our mind becomes very important because how we construe the situation will determine our activity.

A change in the phenomena I encounter challenges the fixity of my belief system which brings with it an anxiety - who am I? Now there's a real crossroads. I can say, for example, that I don't want immigrants in 'my' country because they are making me feel unsafe and I'm not sure I know who I am any more. Or we can say that immigrants are wonderful because they open us up and give me new opportunities to find out who I could be. That's a real tension between the pro and anti-immigration movements. Both of them integrate though the fundamental basis is how we understand self-definition. Do we have a tight construction that says that unless I can predict exactly how my life is going to be I will be unhappy. Therefore variation in the field is an attack on myself or do we have a loose construal and say, well let's see what happens. It's not so bad how life evolves. How my life is today I never imagined it to be twenty years ago so let's see what the fire brings. And clearly our own history and psychology influences us very much whether we are tight or loose in that personal construct system.

From the Buddhist point of view the key point is, we have some influence over the kind of interpretive categories we employ and in particular the amount of emotional investment we put into them. So if we make a very tight definition of ourselves then, we can feel attacked or undermined by something that someone else says. For example years ago when I was in India and I was sitting in the house of my teacher, he was sitting on a little wooden bed and I was sitting on the ground at his feet and I was looking at his feet. And on the edge of his foot at the bottom of his foot he had some thick skin which had thickened up because he was used to sitting cross-legged. And I was new to sitting cross-legged and my feet often hurt a lot on the stone floor. So I said to him “you’ve got this tick skin there this must be marvellous.” And he became very, very angry he said “are you calling me a horse you think I’ve a hoof on my foot “ (laughter) There I was really upset no, no. So you can see he interpreted in that way.

Another time we were talking about if somebody is running towards a tree which way they will go round it, because he was trying to explain to me why Tibetans do circumambulations go round holy objects in a clockwise direction. And I said if you were running towards a tree you would go round whatever side seemed easiest. He said “no this is mad, everybody goes round this way. Its normal and natural for human beings when they come to a tree they go round like that. You go on your right side round an object.” I said, “I don’t think so.” Again he became very angry - “you’re stupid, you don’t know anything, you go look at human beings they always go round that way.” In that way you can see that culturally, this was a very educated person with a very flexible creative mind but he had certain cultural assumptions in his mind. {29:48} and we all have these assumptions. It just seems natural for us that this is how it’s done. It just seems to be the case, that is to say, it seems from in a Buddhist language self-existing it’s a self-apparent truth, like in this Lincoln’s address - its natural and apparent to all human beings are born free - maybe not.

Comment: it’s interesting that a lama is thinking like this - a teacher thinking like this.

James: I can give you many surprising stories - because that’s also our projection is that we imagine that being freed in one area of life will free you in every other area, people have their own kind of ideas. People who come from very hierarchical cultures are likely to privilege hierarchy they will see that as innately good. C.R. Lama he also used always call democracy - demon crazy - because he said when ordinary stupid people are given power then the whole world falls down and when Indra Ghandi declared a state of emergency in India he said “this is wonderful now we have strong leadership.” He believed in strong leadership. I myself not being a top person, being a bottom person, I’m not so happy with it. But he was a top person so he always had the confidence that whenever the system came he’d be on the top. I being somewhat anxious of disposition believed whatever happened I’d be on the bottom. I have a different orientation but both of these are manifestations of your history. It’s very difficult to escape the cultural context of your early conditioning. These assumptions are embedded. For example, if you put your foot out and show someone else the sole of your foot the Tibetans will think this is an insult. We don’t think it’s an insult we just think it’s someone stretching their leg, that they are probably a bit tired of sitting. So we don’t see the foot as dirty. In India if you take

your shoe off and hit someone with it, that's a big, big insult. We don't think it's an insult we think it's a bit crazy.

But the key thing here is you have to interpret, you cannot get out of interpretation. In the same way, clearly we are bound through cognition into linguistic patterns but you can't become enlightened just by being silent. In India they had a tradition of people called muni, {32:28} people who took a vow of silence and never they never speak again. But that's not necessarily very useful because you still have thoughts going on in your head and these will be linguistically based. The presuppositions and the assumptions that are embedded in language cannot be dissolved one by one, they have to be dissolved by recognising that language is itself the dynamic play of the unborn dharmakaya, then its immediately very time you're speaking it's just a flow of sound and emptiness. But if we try to work out what's the right way to speak, what's the wrong way, what's a reasonable proposition what's an unreasonable proposition you will never get to the end of it because there is no end to thinking.

So back to emptiness - emptiness means it operates on two levels in the Buddhist tradition. The first is as a path of negation, that because we start with the assumption that there are truly existing phenomena, when we analyse phenomena and look into their nature for example looking at a watch. What we see is watch but a watch is made of many working parts which if you take the back off you can see. If these parts stop collaborating together the watch ceases to function and then although we may say it's a watch it's a useless watch because the function of the watch is the meaning of the watch. That is it's a mechanism for telling the time. There is no essence to the watch-ness. The watch manifests due to the particular patterning and dynamic interaction of its component parts. Each of these component parts is very important. By bringing these parts together in a proper pattern the watch comes into being. By taking the parts out the watch ceases to be. At a certain point of the bringing together of these components there is a creation of a meta formation - which is the watch itself. So you can see that this is a battery watch and the battery runs out and this is a useless thing stuck on my arm. I go into a shop and they take open the back and they take out the old battery and put in the new battery, as soon as they put in the new battery it starts going round. Ah - but it's at the wrong time so we adjust the time to the right time, so now the mechanism is working it's at the right time - I have my watch back.

So there we really see the watch is not a thing in itself - its dependent upon the life of the battery, me having enough money to buy a battery me being able to find a shop that sells the right sized battery for this particular watch and so on. But when these factors come together then the watch is a watch is a watch. That is to say, we forget what is required, so sometimes it's quite a surprise when the battery runs out because you take it for granted that the watch will always be there to tell you then time. And the stopping of the battery is a reminder - this is dependent on something else. So this is the Buddhist view of co-dependent origination. On the basis of these factors this pattern will arise. What arises is not a substance is a pattern or a process. So emptiness is from this point of view means no essence, no substance, no inherent self-nature - what we have is appearance. In the general Mahayana philosophy this is as far as it goes {36:57}

Everything is essentially devoid of any inherent self-nature. This view was intensified to say if everything is empty, empty is way everything is. Not necessarily a wise philosophical move but everything now belongs in the family of emptiness. So emptiness is therefore the real nature of everything. You get a double move. Nothing has a real nature therefore it is empty but because its empty, emptiness is actually its real nature therefore what it is, is empty. And gradually emptiness takes on a kind of metaphysical investment. It seems to be a kind of endlessly deconstructing but also endlessly insisting sense of something. And it's very dangerous as a concept as CR Lama used to say many, many times. It is the heart of everything but you have to be very careful with it otherwise you turn it into a meta substance and then you get very deluded. However in the practices of tantra and dzogchen everything begins with emptiness.

So if you're doing a tantric visualisation it begins in the midst of a clear blue sky and out of the sky comes rainbow light, rainbow light forms into a ball of light, the ball of light opens into more rainbow light which opens into a small seed letter which opens into the mandala palace and so on. You get a whole procession of movement, where does the movement come from? The clear blue sky - the clear blue sky is the unborn emptiness itself. That is to say there is no material ground for manifestation. Manifestation is the self-display or the radiance, or the richness, or the potential of emptiness itself. There is nothing to grasp and yet everything appears. So this is the great mystery of existence. How is it that something comes out of nothing? Christians say God did it. Buddhists say, ah - when something comes out of nothing it's not a big a big problem because the something that comes out of nothing is nothing. There is no contradiction. Form is emptiness - emptiness is form, sound is emptiness - emptiness is sound. It's not that you have two categories, you have emptiness nothing at all and then you have substance true existence. Appearance is appearance *and* emptiness they come together in Tibetan they call it *nangtong* there's no division between the two {40:15} its empty substance or empty appearance. It's there but it's not there of itself but it's there as the showing or display of emptiness.

So all the qualities that manifest that we experience are linked with emptiness. Tibetan language is very nice for that because they put whole streams of these in a row *nangtong* - appearance and emptiness, *saltong* - clarity and emptiness, *rigtong* - awareness and emptiness, many, many signifiers just to say whatever is appearing is of its nature empty and yet it appears. And in its appearance there is differentiation that is to say, red is not blue, but red has no redness defining in it, blue has no blueness defining in it, these are simply different vibrations or different qualities of expression of the ground nature which is empty. So these two features come together in the notion of the *dharmadhatu* . *Dharma* here means phenomena which in terms of meditators means experience because there are no objects existing out there in themselves, what we have is our experience. So experience and *dhatu* means space it means the infinite ungraspable domain of the immediacy of all that we experience. So we look around this room many. Many things shapes, colours, people's heads and so on. Some light coming in from the window, some electric light, many different pockets of darkness and light. All of this is the appearance of the dharmadhatu or appearance *in* the dharmadhatu - it doesn't come from the dharmadhatu to somewhere else, although in the tantrum traditions that's often a concept you have in the puja's that there is a sacred place and from the sacred to the profane the divine forms come and go back. In dzogchen it's the direct immediacy where are we know? Where we

have always been in the dharmadhatu. Within the dharmadhatu everything is arising immediately and differentiation occurs according to our volition, which is karmically determined and our categorisation which is culturally educationally determined.

So we say we are in Germany, we say we are in this village, in this Buddhist centre - this is where we are. Those of you who are German probably did quite a lot of German geography at school so you have a fair sense of where this place stays in relation to other places - well certainly more than me. So this place becomes meaningful. Now outside in the village they show some mining, some little trucks that the miners had for going into the tunnels to bring out the coal and so on. So we can have some sense of the history of this place and gradually we build it up, so we know where this place is because we know how far it is to Bonn, we know how far it is to Berlin, we know what the climate is here. We build up a picture of this place as being what it is - but this place is inseparable from the dharmadhatu. All these stories we tell about this place are movements of energy within the space of the emergence of the trees, the car, houses, the buildings. This is our world wherever we go its about stories experience and stories and we have - as soon as you tell the story the story has two possibilities. One, is you sit inside the story that you tell - I live in London, I live near Paddington, London is like this, London is like that I can create a whole story about that is and how's that changing, and the public transport, da da da da da. A big long story, that can seem very real but it's a flow of words, a flow of concepts it is a process. What is established? The mere fact that James is a bit tired of living in London - and yet he continues to live there so we can't believe this guy too much. (Laughter)

In that way patterns are created nothing is established. That is the essential point for understanding of how to approach death. Patterns we experience, these are patterns without individual essence, nothing is established as existing in truth. We exist as patterns, this patterning is changing, changing through time and then we die, which is the end of this sequence of pattern formation. Then out of the ground of this sequence of pattern formation arises other patterns. Whereas if you take a materialistic view, we are a thing and this thing will one day not be there. So the something-ness of me - how I exist and the nothingness of being a corpse are completely oppositional. So its normal in western philosophy to say death is completely unknowable because a living person cannot know death because when you're dead by definition you're not alive. In the Tibetan tradition we have a lot of writings on the bardos, especially the experience of moving into death. Because actually awareness is present in death though consciousness is not. Consciousness collapses but awareness is present. So this is the general view and the reason for setting it out in this way is so that when we go into the meditation have a bit more skill to navigate ourselves between these polarities of being caught up in beliefs and taking them for granted and going into a kind of distancing analysis and trying to reject what going on. The middle way is to be in the state of the mirror where there is an open acceptance of whatever is occurring without belief in it as being the appearance of something inherently real.

So there are many, many books on emptiness. If you are interested in that area you could have a look in the bookshop here and the librarian and they can give you some advice and it's a very important thing to investigate. So for example we go soon for lunch, the cook will bring out

some dishes that are prepared - and they are prepared. Prepared means a bit of this and a bit of that and a bit of something else put in a pot with some water and some heat and a big handful of salt (laughter) then we have our lunch. So these different ingredients which of course also have their history that they were brought from farmers in Germany or farmers in some other country and they are brought to this country and brought here because people imagine that people like different tastes. So all of the ingredients have their own history so as your eating the food you can imagine the rice or potatoes or something they regrowing in the field and that requires rain, nowadays it has fertiliser, it has sprays against insects and so on, it requires sunshine, it requires agricultural labourers who may not be German anymore and so on. So there you can see a whole interactive field present in your bowl of food and in that way we practice again, and again, and again thinking in terms of processes and not of entities.

Movement

Because anyway we do a lot of sitting here which is not so great for the body but also, just as when we do the chanting together we experience sound emerging and passing, when you have your body moving together with other peoples you can experience different shapes, different postures and gestures arising and passing, and it's all about recognising movement, Movement our whole life is movement. The only stillness we ever find is awareness which never changes but consciousness, the mind, the emotions, sensations embodiment in relation to others - all of this is ceaselessly moving.

Rigpa

You won't get barley and if you plant barley you want get wheat. This is obvious, so in a situation like that you have the seed, you have the earth, you have the water and the sunlight. The key factor is the seed, the seed is the basic cause and the earth is the secondary cause, giving support and nourishment and then you have the further causes or supportive conditions the rainfall and the sunshine. The key thing is the seed, this is normally how we think about karma as well. If you do a good deed you will get a good result coming out later, if you do a bad deed you will get a bad result coming out later. We understand this when we're children you're told to study hard to get through your exams and try to get some success in your life. We know that at work and in relationships if we don't make some effort things start to go the wrong way. But the view of dzogchen is very, very different and its very important to clarify exactly the understanding which is embedded here. Because all these different dharma paths can be organised in terms of view, meditation, activity and result and if the view is not clear then when you come into the meditation you come into the activity you can get very confused.

The view dzogchen is the view of your own nature because dzogchen means the natural completion of your nature, is from the very beginning your own mind is perfect it is complete. Awareness is the natural ground of experience. The ground is here if you like, the primary cause, secondary conditions cause the arising of all kinds of manifestations. Some of these

manifestations we call good some we call bad - they have the same ground. Whether what arises is called good or bad it makes no difference to the ground, awareness is inseparable from emptiness. As we were looking this morning emptiness means ungrasp ability there is nothing there to hold onto. If you're thinking about your own mind, you might go for some therapy and you come to recognise - oh I have patterns in my thoughts and when I get caught up in this patterns I become depressed, I have some core negative beliefs. I believe that I am stupid or I believe people don't like me or I believe that other people will be more successful than me. In the course of a therapy you can start to recognise that belief and then you can start to be aware of that belief as it functions. That is to say, the mind in the sense of our ego consciousness is self-reflective, we can know about the content of our own mind and through doing that we open up our range of choices. {4:08} this is very useful but it's not what is meant by rigpa.

Awareness is not something that you can think about. You can't think about it the way you can think about a memory or a sensation or a thought even a subtle aesthetic experience can be thought about. In a romantic period there was a notion of the sublime that kind of almost poignant incredible sensation of beauty which both takes you out of yourself and returns you to yourself. So even these subtle sensations can be caught or captured in some way, but there is no way to capture rigpa. Awareness, rigpa is like light passing through the sky, its compared sometimes to the sun which is radiating out light and sometimes to the dome where the light pervades the sky but you can't see any source to it yet because the sun is still below the horizon. Moment by moment when you are here everything is that is experienced by us is basically registered by awareness there is no other register of experience. We, in terms of our conscious thought processes are not able to recognise rigpa. People don't talk about recognising their own mind this is an illusion you cannot recognise your own mind because it's not something that can be recognised. You can recognise the face of a friend, you can recognise the type of fruit you're eating or the kind motor car you're in, because these have shape and colour, these have qualities, what in Tibetan called *tsennyid*. {6:26} which means signs, that is to say our ego consciousness operates in a semiotic economy. It operates in a field of signs which can be identified and interpreted and compared and contrasted. Rigpa is not like that, rigpa is intrinsic meaning which is just the as is ness, the thusness of experience before there is any conceptual elaboration. It has nothing to hold onto. Thoughts can catch thoughts, we can be caught by other people's thoughts, but mind itself can't be caught or recognise.

So what has it got to do with us then? Does it mean it's some nebulous faculty floating around in the ether? No, it is ourselves - we need to become attentive. Attentive to ourselves not looking at ourselves not thinking about ourselves but being present. Some people say that Buddhism is basically a therapy, but dzogchen masters like Namkhai Norbu strongly disagree, he doesn't like psychotherapy at all. Because psychotherapy involves talking about your life, it involves narrative, telling stories. Now if you change the story of your life that can offer more possibilities of moving and changing your identity but you're still caught up in conceptually mediated kind of experience. You might do some direct forms of psychodrama or gestalt and that can bring more immediacy but that kind of therapy is a bit old fashioned now. Mainly people are addicted to CBT which is very much telling people about how to improve their mental hygiene. Don't have bad thoughts have good thoughts, so it's a kind of Hinayana dharma at best. But the reason why

meditation is not like therapy is that is wanting to unlock this linking that we have to thoughts as the purveyor of meaning and value.

If we don't have thoughts we feel bereft, empty and lost but actually the thought is a false food, the food of addiction which keeps you always wanting more. Rigpa is not relying on anything. Conceptualisation relies on the feel of more and more thoughts.

The mind is there from the very beginning - how will we find that mind? By being present with it. That means not attending to something else. The movement of this as you will know from meditation is quite subtle, because it appears that we are looking for our mind actually our mind is there and is revealed to us when we stop looking for something else.

So the issue is not to look for the mind, but to stop looking for something else - so in the meditation when you follow after a thought or you wait expectantly for another thought you are looking out for the content of the mind, what shows itself and that distraction from the present moment means that awareness that is here, is not attended to. And it's not, one of the reasons it's not attended to is you can't make sense of it, it is beyond understanding. Now the Buddhist vocabulary coming from India is a very basically a cognitive focused vocabulary, a kind of epistemological vocabulary its very much about making differentiations between mental phenomena. But awareness is the presence of a clarity that reveals what is there, so its not an epistemological move its not trying to identify registers of categorisations to compare and contrast, it's more like an ontological presence but not ontological as establishing being as something as such, a being which can then be defined and made sense of. It is being present, being present means being present as the openness which registers what is occurring. That is to say there is no intrinsic content in awareness it doesn't come with furniture, it's like renting an apartment and its complete bare, there's no carpet, no nothing. You put your own furniture in there.

So if your used to living in a room with furniture, you come into the flat and think - god, this is empty, there's nothing here. If you've trained to look at the space as an interior designer or an architect when you open the d door you see the space. Because space is emoting you have learnt to see. If you go to art school and you do engraving or drawing you learn to see space, you learn about perspective and you see space itself is the medium through which you have the depiction or the manifestation of experience. So how do we become space? Well, by not pretending to be something else. It's not that we have to become anything, we are already space. As we were looking this morning, impermanence is showing us moment by moment the vanishing of our identifications, identifications of external objects and identifications of internal events - it's always moving away. Dzogchen awareness is inseparable from the self-liberation of phenomena. When it says awareness is fresh and naked, this is because the potential coverings of awareness what you can call the obscuration's that are described and worked on in the Mahayana and tantric paths, these obscuration's are all self-vanishing, self-liberating. {14:19} therefore the basic interaction in a dzogchen is - don't do anything at all. It is the non-activity of the ego self that will reveal the ego as the energy of the dharmakaya. But when the ego is active it becomes so intoxicated by its own dynamic that it does not see its very ground of it's being.

This ground of being is not solid like the earth outside it is the space of occurrence. So it's a ground in the sense of something being basic and always there. It's always present in its absence. Its absent as a substance and presence as the registering of that which is other and self.

So for example we are sitting in this room. All of us here exercise something in our bodies we experience certain movements, tensions in our muscles if we're not used to sitting on the floor and so on, tensions in the back, we see shapes and colours of people in the room doing various things. As we looked earlier we interpret this, we say that person is wearing grey, that person is wearing blue and so on. If we don't do that, if we don't make sense of what is here? What are we left with? You can't say. In order to say something about what is here, you yourself have to move your mind to identify what is there and the process of identification is a process of projection - because there is nothing there. There are hooks for your projection, so that it seems that when we speak we are making direct statements about what is there.

Language shimmers across the surface of the world like sunlight across water. When we are in language we are essentially in a self-referential gaze - language speaks to language. Language never gets the thing itself, the thing itself always vanishes. And just as phenomenologists have looked for the thing itself as an external phenomenon, like what is beauty? What is a tree? Buddhists have looked the other way, what is the mind? And they have come to the same conclusion. You cannot catch the thing. If the thing is an object you can't catch it, if the thing is a subject - you can't catch it. That doesn't mean it's not there, it means that the orientation and the resultant methodology is wrong. The ego is appropriative, the ego is a colonialist, the ego is always imagining the world is empty and so we can project our ideas and fantasies onto the world. Relaxing that energy, relaxing if you like, the phallic drive of the ego, we start to experience the passive receptive quality of rigpa.

Rigpa is itself passive - it doesn't do anything, its receptive - it reveals everything and yet it's not helpless because it contains an energy that shows everything which is received. So rigpa receives itself all of the time. What awareness is aware of is its own energy, so it's both emergent and unmoving. So we can see this for ourselves, we sit here and have lots of experiences, arising and passing, arising and passing. You cannot catch any of these experiences. If you try to speak about it, if you think about it, you enter the domain of storytelling and the story and the immediacy are two parallel streams. So the ego likes the domain of the story and in the absorption inside that domain, ever-present awareness is ignored. I don't know in Germany, but if take a child into a shop where they have baskets of fruit and piles of chocolates, the child is likely to look at the chocolate and not the fruit. The fruit is there but why you look at fruit when you can have chocolate? The chocolate is highly processed, full of funny ingredients to make it very tasty,, the fruit is just fruit. In the same way we are interested in chocolate in these interesting thoughts, feelings, my opinion about this and that, we all have so much to say. But the fruit the simple emergent experience becomes less visible.

So in summary, the mind, our mind – it's not theory it's our own nature moment by moment, open empty pure from the very beginning. It means not dependent upon anything, not touched

by anything, uncluttered offers hospitality, reception to whatever is occurring and it offers that hospitality fearlessly because the nature of the mind is vajra is indestructible. When bad things happen to us and we feel very sad, maybe we do bad things and we feel remorse and guilt and shame, at that time we tend to experience a shrinking, we become smaller, maybe we don't want to see other people, we don't want other people to know what we've done, and we feel defined and completely diminished by this activity which has occurred. Who is the one who shrinks? A series of ideas and the linked affect and embodied experience is shrinking. How do we know that we are having that experience? Because there is an experiencer. Who is the experiencer? Two aspects, one is the ego and the other is awareness. {22:39}

Practice advice

We will be meditating many times in the next few days. At first it's not so good to do it for too long a time because it's not something that can be done by the will, we're not trying to achieve anything. There are many wrong turnings which can occur in this kind of practice, particularly judgement and disappointment. And it goes back to what I was saying earlier that we tend to evaluate how we are by the content of our experience. So if you're sitting in the practice and your mind feels dull and stupid, and you think, "I'm not meditating at all, nothing is happening, I'm not making any progress." Then it's easy to feel disheartened. Why are we being disheartened because we feel we should be making progress {1:04} When you make progress you go from A - B. Why do you want to get to B? Because B is better than A. The basic view of dzogchen is that everything arises from the same ground. CR Lama used to say, there is nothing special in the world, so no one thing is better than any other. If the mind is dull and stupid, if the mind is bright and clear, as long as you are experiencing something you're not dead, if you're not dead, then you should be present with what is being experienced.

This is the only path. If you enter into judgement and say, "I want to have a better content in my mind." Then you will become troubled. The *Simply Being* book gives some advice from Nuden Dorje and from Patrul Rinpoche about meditation. Now many similar texts of meditation instruction are translated. Nuden Dorje and Patrul Rinpoche both describe how some meditators become dissatisfied when their mind is full of anger. But don't be upset when you're angry, just stay with the one who is angry. Some meditators become upset when they feel very depressed and lost, then they weep salt tears and say, "I cannot meditate, what's the point?" Don't despair just stay present with the one who is despairing. This is always the case. The mirror is not touched by the quality of the reflection. This is the central point. As long as you seek to improve your mind pushing away what you take to be bad, trying to get more of what you think to be good, you will not be able to experience the real meditation. You'll simply be in the continuing game of the ego {3:08} which wants the good and wants to avoid the bad.

So this is the central point. Many different experiences arise, who can say whether our meditation is good or bad? Meditation is just meditation it's just sitting, it's just open. As it says in this short prayer from Ridgzin Godem which some of you know, the mind is not made by the good intentions, the good deeds of the Buddha. And it's not harmed or destroyed or defiled, by

the stupid thoughts of ordinary people. The mind itself, the radiant awareness is not a construct. So whatever is being constructed whether you think it's good or bad, right or wrong - don't worry about it. If your mind goes in some very perverse fantasy, just stay present with the fantasy, you're not falling into the fantasy it's not catching you, so don't run away from it. In the city when you walk along the pavement, cars go by very fast, if you step off the pavement twenty centimetres, some car will hit you and break your body. As long as you stay on the pavement unless the driver is a drunk, you're ok. This is very good news, it means you have to, you can be very close to danger without being in danger. If you're walking on a mountain path, you look down and think, "Crikey, I don't want to fall." Just stay on the path; if you stay on the path the danger is there but you're safe. If you think I'm only safe if the danger is far away then you won't have a real life because danger is always close to us.

The way we don't fall into danger is that we stay present not trying to avoid the danger, not getting excited and upset by it, not falling into it, just with it. In that separation which is no separation at all but is separate you have freedom. The reflection is in the mirror, its very, very intimate right inside the mirror not on the outside, in the mirror {5:47} but the mirror is not contaminated. When you're sitting in the meditation, you're not having thoughts, thoughts are not coming to you, thoughts are right inside you. They are you, so you can't sort of get them out this is your experience. But if you stay open with the experience, these experiences arise and pass through you. This is the absolute heart of the meditation practice. This is the fearlessness of the yogi, this is the trust in the indestructible nature of our awareness. So whatever the content of the mind or the body all kind of sensations can come but don't be dismayed if they seem bad, don't get excited and proud if they seem good, stay present as the awareness and let experience come and go.

Questions and Answers

So see if there are any questions or things you want to raise.

Question: We discussed the term to be with the thought, seeing the thought arising and then to be, we discussed the problem to be with the thought. The anxiousness to fall into the thought when you are with it. And then you say ok I am there, hello anger you can go - this is too short perhaps. And so how to manage to be at the edge on being with the thought without falling into it without putting

Answer: Ok. The Tibetan expression for this is *thogtu* which is on not really with but on {1:07} and CR Lama explained this in various ways. He said for example, a thief steals some money, he has money, but the money is not really his because its stolen and shows relationship is artificial. But if someone is given money by their father, then that money is theirs and it is there *on* their relationship with their father. Or another example he gave was that, if there is a prince, if the prince is the eldest son, the prince will become the king, on the basis of being the son of the queen and king. So it's not dependent on their qualities, which for me living with the royal family I'm very aware of, {laughter} but it is dependent on the blood line of the royal succession.

So *on* means on the basis of the openness of awareness, staying on that awareness we experience the thoughts coming and going. So it's on being as it were the state of the mirror that the thoughts come and go. It's not like we're training to be some trapeze artist or high wire walker who has to have exquisite balance between falling into and being away because that's going to be artificial because you're always adjusting yourself to find a balance.

So we can begin in various ways and later we will do some breathing an Aa and so on, there are many ways just to enter into this taste of openness also in tantra. When we're open its just openness. On the basis of this openness resting in this openness being s this openness because these are all special prepositions and they create a dualistic view, but it's not like that, just in that the something arises and goes by. On the basis on being in a lovely warm bath with many, many bubbles and my favourite ducks floating out of the bubbles, when the telephone rings let it ring. Undisturbed, so being there irrelevant. So it's about resting, rest is the defence because res is the opposite of mobilisation and activation. Usually we go from rest, there is a stimulus which jokes out of the state of rest a response which is the engagement. By really resting there is no stimulus to bring a response.

So it means that the message if you like arrives something is happening, a letter comes in, who opens the letter. The ego opens the letter there's agitation, awareness opens the letter - oh ya! Nothing to do because awareness has no arms, no legs, no ears, no nose no tongue - can't do anything. Doesn't even open the letter. - Just looking! } the bills are mounting up. This is all delinquent dharma.

Comment. There seems to be a very important {5:32} thoughts about family about not to have enough money for the next day to buy something needed. But they are very important and then sometimes it seems to be better to push them away, because otherwise I know I will fall into it. But then it's not this, what we should do.

James: again it depends who is the thought being delivered to? If you in your ego self with your history and your responsibilities open the letter then you get agitated. So you can imagine it when you do the meditation say you relax into an out-breath and you can imagine in that moment your lying in bed, you're dying surrounded by all these people who say, "What will we do about this, what will we do about that?" "Leave me alone! Can't you see that I'm busy dying!" {Laughter} Irrelevant! But these things are very important because that is where we see how our ordinary consciousness is indeed dialogic, is a part of an ongoing dialogue which means we are touched by events they impact us stimulus and response, and we also go out and touch the world in various ways. Provoking things, eliciting things, making things happen. So this is the sphere of interactive activity {7:15} awareness observes both but it's not the engaged subject.

So, this is not a very accurate way but if you imagine a vertical axis, at the bottom is the open dimension being - rigpa itself, not moving. On the surface of this is revealed all the experience which is occurring maybe if you imagine it is a pond a beautiful pond and reflected on the surface of the pond are many, many images. And then a wind blows across the pond and there's some turbulence and the images start to move. So there you have the third level of engaged

manifestation of participation in the world. So this third level is always active, we're hearing, we're tasting, we're touching, we're doing things, we've thoughts and so on. Some movement is always there. The movement is not here. So relaxing means relaxing into the level that never moves being open with the clarity within which movement occurs and not being trapped in the movement itself.

But traditional Buddhist view ignorance arises there is a forgetfulness of the ground, the open dimension is closed to us, we don't get it. The open field is split due to the duality of self and other. So as an individual you then have concerns about things in the family or business or whatever and these get to you because {9:07} they're important in your encapsulated life and as long as you are in that position of an isolated individual connected by lines of importance and communication we are going to be disturbed.

Comment: That's it

James: That's it. So integration is always relaxing into the space so in the period of the meditation these things are irrelevant. They're irrelevant, which is why self-liberation sounds nice if you're unburdening yourself of things which persecute you but they're not so nice about letting go of things you are very attached or involved to. Because it feels like you're losing bits of yourself. And in some ways that's necessary because what we take to be our self is little spirals of energy little patterns of involvement and if we can let go of them we become spacious. It's because we are nothing that we can be many different things. If we were only one thing it would be very hard to proceed in the world. So if you're talking with your daughter or your partner or your friends you speak in different ways. Probably your face looks a bit different, your postures different, your skin tensions different, you come into being in different ways with different people you meet. So there's no one person.

This former prime minister in Britain Margaret Thatcher has died, some people say that she was a wonderful woman she saved the country, other people say that she was a hardhearted woman who destroyed everything. People have different views according to where they are. If you put all the pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle you wouldn't get a clear picture of the person. So what we have are these parts or these part views and because it never quite makes sense. We have to be busy.. A bit like the traditional example of the six blind men and the elephant, we get different impressions of different situations. And it's never very clear so you have to think more and do more. So in a family situation there is always something to worry about. What does that turbulence mean? It means a lot on the level of interaction, on the level of depth it doesn't mean anything at all. So if you only were on the level of depth you would have a kind of nihilistic, null void attitude where nothing matters, which would be very restricted. However if you're only on the surface level everything can seem very important and you become over-stimulated.

Instead of such polarisation which keeps us trapped in limited patterning, it is more helpful to relax in to the intrinsic integrity of the three aspects of openness, its spontaneous expression as the undivided field and the energy of precise manifestation. When you awaken to the integrity of these three in full communication you are part of a self-regulating system. We have to

participate otherwise we're cut off, but if we only participate we get overwhelmed. With these three together you have a natural balance.

When we die all our troubles of this life will vanish. If we remember this it will help us not to take them so seriously. If we die today all our plans where we think we have to do something because we are the responsible person, will either be done by someone else or they will never be done. So on that level we are interactively relevant and fundamentally irrelevant! They have a saying in Italian - the cemeteries are full of indispensable people.

Question about being addicted to activity

Question: What would you say to a person that's addicted to being busy all the time and if I can't be busy I'm like a zombie if there is no passion if there is no ups and no downs this is not alive at all. If you try to get this across that there's some kind of peace and you come out of peace regularly things are of this basic??? They tell you that this is not alive I need this ups and downs and passions.

James: The Americans have an expression - if it ain't broke not fix it. - If a person doesn't have a problem with it there nothing to do. Buddhism is not an evangelical religion you won't be required to go out and knock on hundred doors to bring them the good news.

Comment: What if this person is wanting to do Buddhism?

James: Ah ha - Now the mouse is staring to bite the cheese.

Comment: So you can't have your ego on your back and go the pathway?

James: so they are moving between to very common states that are described in the meditation text. One in Tibetan means *Godpa* which means wild like a wild animal which means excited {1:21} slightly manic wanting a lot of excitement to go on. And the other is called *chingwa* which means sinking and dull. So it's saying if I'm not up then I'm down so it's a slightly manic depressive movement, bipolar movement which we all have to a certain extent. And they are saying I prefer to be up then to be down. Fair enough! "Why do you like to be up? What's so good about that?" " Well I feel expansive, I feel strong in myself, I feel like I can enjoy things." " What happens when you fell down?" " I feel cut off I feel dead." Ok, so these are feelings. If they're interested in dzogchen then the question is, who is the one who experiences the excitement? Who is the one who experiences the dullness? Because for them at the moment they are two different people. My happy self has the up time and my sad self has the down time. I don't want to be in my sad self because it's sad. that's obvious, I want to be in my happy self. Bad, bad down self, Ha good self! So they've got their scissors out, but you can't cut yourself pieces. Of course you can in many ways but really you can't.

Duality is a lie so this kind of splitting is not going to {2:47} work. So to integrate which is partly the Kleinian depressive position to bring together the positive and the negative without them

wiping each other out means there has to be space that allows the movement of good and bad emotions. And you can only do that if you recognise the good emotion and the so called bad emotion are both your children. This is my experience, sometimes I'm happy and sometimes I'm sad. Life is what is happening, not our intention. This person has no power to secure good times all the time. So the fantasy that they should be able to do that, increases the dread of the bad time. If you're in this down state, do you die? No. Of course some people kill themselves, they say this is so intolerable I would rather be dead. Why is that? This is because the pot that they have is too small. I have a big load of shit and it's overwhelming me. I can't contain this, it's all too much. We can't determine what the world will throw at us, but we can work on the size of our pot.

So if you, as we all do, if you contract when you have pain, if somebody hits you, you retreat, you cower down. If your whole psychological energetic system collapses you will be less able to welcome what's coming. This is why the dzogchen approach in some ways is counter intuitive, because it says open, "but I want to close, I don't want this." Open - it's not as bad as you think. It's your retreat and your shrinking which intensifies the awfulness of the situation. Especially when you build on stories like, it shouldn't be happening to me, why does it always happen to me? This is not fair. Why can't I have a reasonable life? My life never gets better. You put these on top and it really becomes terrible, and then you start predicting that this will never change, there's no hope - and then the world gets smaller, and smaller and smaller and the problems get bigger and bigger and bigger, at which point many people vanish.

So the issue is how do we contain our existence? Well, the dzogchen teaching says that awareness is inseparable for the dharmadhatu. Dharmadhatu is infinite space, it has no limit, no top no bottom no side. So whatever kind of difficulty comes we open ourselves to it. So sometimes we've done here this *tonglen* with the sound of Aa and we take in all the difficulties of all the people in the world, because the whole in the heart is infinite. So when you start to experience that you have space as your ground not a small frightened ego self then it's easier to put up with whatever coming. That's the main focus of that kind of intervention. However if the motive for doing drama is just to get away from suffering the narrowness of that focus is probably not helpful. So reading general Mahayana texts like Shantideva and so on also kind of massages some of the knots in the system to open it up and make it more flexible.

Question about meditation

Question: My question is not so important but it's something I think about a lot of time. Whenever I sit in meditation and my gaze is resting in space, the view begins to shift. It's like all of what I see is liquid and it's moving up or down shifting and so on. Is it something I have to be concerned about?

James: No not at all, because everything in this room is held in place by your mind. You are the one who says this is this, this is this, this is that. When you relax the organising matrix of the mental consciousness the stimulus which is coming through the senses is much more in play and then the shifting visual field and auditory field sensational field starts to move around. So

relaxing control, everything becomes more dynamic. And it's by, when we enter into the world we enter with an intention and that's what organises it. But of course as I say, if you're going to do this relax open meditation you're doing it a lot you shouldn't then go and immediately drive a car for example, or use a sharp instrument because what you've been doing is dislocating the locus of control.

Question about karma

Question: I have a question about karma. I would like to ask you how do you know that karma does exist? Because it's something very nicely heard.....if I do many good things, I will also have a good time later. But it's something we cannot know how can you be convinced of karma. How do you know?

James: How I know personally - me, myself? {Laughter} First of all I have to find I, me, myself, then I'll interview them. {Laughter} No, but it's a very interesting question. I personally have no memories of previous lives, lamas have told me things about my previous lives but because I wasn't inhabiting such an exalted state I wasn't very interested in what they were telling me. They didn't tell me I was the Queen of Egypt or something like that, I was one ordinary person. So who cares about the past? About the future I don't know. So on a personal level I don't know about there, what I do know is that the basic structure of karma makes sense to me and explains a lot of what happens even in the course of one life. So for example usually we have a four stage model for karma.

There are four elements, the first is the basis it's called the ground. And this is reification and duality, it's the belief that there are real entities in the world and that we stand in relation to them. So I exist and the objects of the world really exist, on the basis of that winning and losing is very important. Because I've either got money in my pocket or I don't have money in my pocket. On that level it's not a fantasy. The second stage is the intention or the thought, with that if I have no money, say, and I know that you have money my intention is to get your money. So I orient myself into a project, out of all the possible things I could be doing with my mind I'm now formulating an intention. I'm going to steal your money. So I observe where you keep your money and I plan how to take it. The third stage is the enactment, you go out and you leave your bag, I take your purse out of your bag. When you come back into the room and say, "O my god what's happened to my purse?" "I say I don't know, there were so many people in the room running around, there must be some bad people here let me help you look for them. So that's the third stage where the action is completed. The fourth stage is I think, "ha ha I have the money. Ah you're crying but that's you nothing to do with me."

So I am now fully established in satisfaction at the outcome of the action. So they say that any action has its full karmic force if these four factors are there. But if when I see you crying because you haven't got your money and I feel remorse then that lowers the energy of the action, so maybe I try to give you the money back. {3:55} If in the moment when you're out of the room and I put my hand in your bag and I think, "James what are you doing?" then that also lessens it. If I'm thinking oh I'm going to steal your money, and I feel how my mind's getting

excited and I think “what are you doing? What is this? “ See how you become imprisoned you become caught by this idea, then also there is a relaxation. But if I can dissolve at the first stage by not conceptualising strongly self and other and the world itself is a field of ever changing experience in which I’m not thinking, I have to take care of me, my life is very difficult, I have to do that - then I must less likely to enter into a focused negative activity. Does that make sense?

So on the basis of experiencing that in various stages in my life, sometimes I have taken things through to the fourth level and afterwards thought, “my god what did I do. Why did I do that? “ I can see that I got caught and I can see that it had a particular intention. And I have some behaviour patterns from years and years ago that still have a power to catch me, even though I haven’t done them for some time, they remain latent, they are just sort of hovering and they could be activated easily. So that also gives me the sense oh yes, when a behaviour is done it gets massaged into some deep level of the psych so even though it isn’t immediately reactivated, its potential for activation continues for quite some time. So if we believe in future lives, which I do but I can’t prove it in anyway, the I imagine this is just a belief that these energetic swirls or tendencies continue because they are embedded as a very subtle covering of the surface of awareness. {6:17} Does that make sense? So that’s as far as I can take it personally.

In the developed Mahayana conceptualisation they talk of eight consciousnesses which exist in the symbolic form as the eight petalled lotus in the heart. There are five consciousness’s of the senses, the sense organs, there is an organising mental consciousness which takes the sense data coming in and organises it according to our own dispositions and memories and so on. Then there is a seventh consciousness which is the sight of our strong veiled tendencies or afflictions what are called *kleshas* so mental dullness, aversion, desire, pride, jealousy, envy and so on. Moods if you like affected moods can take us over and they form a colouration which distorts our perception. And then there is the eighth consciousness, which is called the *kun zhi nam par she pa* {7:44} the consciousness which is the ground of all. And there are different views of this in the Buddhist schools. In the earliest notion they called it the storehouse at bit like a Freudian unconscious. A place where everything leaves a trace or a register.

You can also see it as the sight of the potential to move out in various ways but the potential is held inside the field of duality and reification. That is to say all the impulses, and thoughts and feelings that generate from this are ones that feel to be strongly real. So from that, in that a tendency can be merged into that level and be reactivated by circumstances much, much later. Because these tendencies last a long time, it’s a bit like this nuclear fuel, the half-life is many, many thousands of years. So a stimulus that one hasn’t encountered for many, many years may suddenly cause completely different construe of the situation. There are many stories in the Tibetan tradition about previous lives and people recognising things. You can believe these or not, but they have quite an interesting little story that some people know about a soldier in Tibet and he was involved in many different battles, he was a very successful soldier and a general and his action led to killing many people. And at a certain point he thought this is terrible, what have I been doing with my life instead of bringing happiness into the world I’ve caused these terrible crimes. So he stopped being a soldier and he went and found a meditation teacher and he

learned about meditation and he decided to spend the rest of his life purifying himself from his former habits.

He lived in a cave very, very simple life and every day he made some offering for all the buddhas and afterwards he would take the offerings outside and scatter them for the birds. He did this for many years and he became very, very calm. One day he took the offerings outside and he was scattering them and many birds arrived and suddenly a thought arose in his mind, “if I had as many soldiers as there are birds here I could rise up and defeat all my enemies.” So with that thought he was back being a general, he left his cave and went down into the valley and again became a soldier and killed many more people. Because being a general existed inside him a whole potential which although it had become peaceful quiescent it had kind of gone asleep, it was still there below the surface. And when that thought caught it manifested in a powerful form. And I’ve experienced that in my own life so I know that can be true, that something I thought I had finished with forever suddenly came shooting back out and all the energy I put into it before, seems to be available now. I wasn’t having to relearn how to do it, I was right in there. So that would be my sense of what in this life we can get a sense of how these factors operate, that we can get caught up in something, taken over by it and in that moment it feels irresistible it feels right. Because in knowing how to be a soldier he just slipped back into that and he was doing it. It’s a bit like in addiction therapy it’s always focused on relapse prevention, because if you know how to be an addict that knowledge doesn’t vanish even if you’re clean for twenty years.

Question about rebirth

Question: I’ve got a theoretical question. You told us that energy manifests as karma. When you die does the energy and karma dissolve? If we are reborn - who is the one who took all this energy and now is reborn again?

James: Nobody is reborn. There is, something is born and it’s a new life, it’s a socio political economic story to say that this is the fourth Khyentse Wangpo or something like that. This is a Tibetan arrangement for the maintenance of monasteries, for sure. You don’t get this in any other Buddhist country, so then you’re going to say all the Buddhist meditators in Japan all these great Roshis, they didn’t know anything at all about anything? It’s a particular Tibetan kind of way of reading the world. It began with the Karmapa’s, the first Karmapa is the first one to recognise this rebirth and then all the other sects said ‘hey this sounds good let’s do this one.’ Why? Because if the big lama dies you have a monastery with no head, so then you have contesting people who will be in charge. So this way you get to know always who is the ownership of the property, who is the head person and it brings a lot of order and security. Now inside that many people talk of remembering having been at Samye Monastery and seeing Padmasambhava and what he heard. Maybe that’s true, we have no way of proving it. Maybe it’s a mythopoetic way of feeling an intuition about something which in many cultures people have.

The central issue is when you’re born - here you are. This is this person. Who they are is influenced by the force field around them. If somebody is born and recognised as a tulku and

everybody says, 'you are the tulku you are the incarnation of this person and that person.' We now have some experiences of Western people being recognised as tulkus and often their experience is not very easy. Even for Tibetan's, one of the Dalai Lama's brothers was recognised as being an incarnation, primarily on the basis of being the brother of the Dalai Lama because everyone in the Dalai Lama's family has to be special. But the he got out of Tibet and he came to America he said, 'I don't remember anything about my previous lives, I'm not very interested in dharma. I'm not a tulku, I wish people would stop calling me an incarnation. I'm just myself.'

So whether you see that as a cultural trope or that people truly are incarnations, the question would be, if somebody is called an incarnation this is adding value, so they become special. But I remember being in Calcutta with my teacher, {4.00} it was hot and we went into a little cafe and my teacher said, "we want coffee, give coffee." The guys goes to bring coffee and then he came back and said, "you want special coffee?" he said, "coffee". Then he said to me - "There is only coffee, special is lying, stealing Indian system." Then he said, "everything is the same, everything is the same. " High low, good, bad this is the work of the mind, everything is just one letter Aa.' He said this many, many times. The heart of the universe is one letter Aa - infinite emptiness, this is all - all the rest is the game and the play of the mind. This is good person, this is a bad person, this person's special, very busy your mind becomes.

So whether somebody is an incarnation or not an incarnation, this is mental activity.

Comment: Now my ego is really afraid of - being nothing.

James: Being nothing or special these are the games of life. Sometimes we're picked up and people like us very much, sometimes we're put down and people don't like us very much. This is very good. As I was saying briefly yesterday the Buddha himself said, if you want to practice the dharma its best not to be born in a very high family, and not in a very low family. if you're in a very high family you get used to power and you don't want to give things up. If you're born in a very low family, you grow up not experiencing very much and you have a narrow view of the world. Better to be in the middle because then you have wider range of experience and that helps. So your own status is just another invisible person is very helpful because it allows you to go here and there and try out many different things. Imagine if you had been recognised like in England as Prince Charles? Not so very nice, everywhere you go paparazzi chasing you, people watching who you kiss, who you don't kiss, This is a hellish life, a terrible life and it's the same for these tulkus, everywhere they go people taking photographs they have to smile all the time. It's not very nice. So blessed are the ordinary for they shall have dinner.

Being in the world

So we can do some practice. This is a practice that integrates a lot of the themes that we have been doing today. Its grounded in emptiness which is o say, we are not a thing, we are not a limited entity we have no vulnerable essence inside us which can be destroyed. Although clearly the patterns of our existence can be changed and shifted by circumstances. We've also been

looking a little bit at non duality, that between us and the world around us there is no wall or barrier. We move out toward the world with our interests and enthusiasms and needs and the world comes towards us with its demands and gifts and possibilities. So we are in a continuous process of interaction with the environment. And of course we have our ordinary sense of capacity, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by circumstances, life gets too much and we want to say - back off, leave me alone. In terms of the construction of our ordinary self, our social self this is just an obvious limitation there is nobody who has infinite energy, everybody gets drained. However, when we're wanting to integrate the ground openness and our manifest being we're wanting to bring more capacity for openness into play. And we do this in the meditation practice so in the course of our interactive daily life although we still have a limitation of our capacity, firstly we can recognise when we are at the limit of our capacity and secondly we're able to just ease it out a little bit {2:27} Particularly, on the basis of not being afraid. We have to be not be afraid to say yes, and not be afraid to say no. Saying no is very, very important in life because it is a way of blocking. Why should we block circumstances because sometimes people are crazy. Sometimes people are just very rude, vulgar and stupid. And there is no need to put up with that unless like me you're a psychotherapist and you're paid to. (Laughter) I have spent many, many years learning how to eat shit. Not to everyone's taste I would say but that's part of the job, to allow people to behave in ways that is really unacceptable and to work with their limit. But in ordinary life that usually not very good and even in therapy having to say to people, if you behave like this in the big world it's not going to work. You can do it in here for a while so we can understand what's going on but, continuing like this will create so much turbulence with the world around you it's not a good idea. You have to be able to set a boundary.

So knowing that boundaries are artificial we still have to set them. If you have no boundaries at all you get taken advantage of, if your boundaries are too self-serving you become over protective and you can't let the world in and you can't get touched by other people. It's a life time's work I think to be able to *be* in the world with the people. Very often we imagine that ordinary life is the easy part because we are all here and somehow we are surviving, we do some work or we take care of people, somehow our daily life is going on, but religious life this is something special, this is higher and more difficult. But from the point of view of dzogchen it's the other way round, recognising your own nature is not so difficult, you can have at least some sense of it in the practice. What is much more difficult is coming into interaction with other people and not losing your ground That's the real work, being in the interactive field and finding the right way of positioning yourself not too big, not too small, not too accepting, not too rejecting. It's a continuous pulsation, and really it is like a dynamic mediation because if you do something and you don't do it very skilfully then some feeling tone arises, with that very often some thoughts, you have some regret some guilt. But if you're in the interaction life is moving on. So now you are looking over your shoulder about what you did with regret and you're moving forward at the same time. This is not recommended in terms of safety it's much better to be looking where you are going. So learning to release and allow ourselves to make mistakes is very important. From the very beginning nobody has ever existed who didn't make a mistake.

When it says our nature is *Kuntuzangpo* it means always pure, always pure means including mistakes because everything is pure. {6:17} including mistakes. So this is very, very important

if you stay in realm of dualistic splitting you say these people are perfect and I am a poor fallen creature. This is to misunderstand the structure of the dharma. The *dharmakaya* - the natural purity of the mind gives rise to all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana including mistakes. When people have a social political status it may be difficult for them to apologise because that's part of the limitation of their social role but apologising is also very useful because it allows us to come back into the freshness of the situation. We can apologise directly face to face, or you can do it through Dorje Sempa. Dorje Sempa practices is a little bit like Catholic confession, you go into a little room and you say all the bad things then you come outside, no-one else should know. But much more brave is to apologise face to face because if you apologise to a person you are making a social recognition - I get lost - what does that mean? It means that getting lost is not really getting lost if you don't abandon yourself because you got lost. You see? You make a small mistake, last moment, then you think, "ah I'm an arsehole why did I do that shit? What am I going to do?" Then you are abandoning yourself, you're abandon your own ground you're not able to integrate the mistake into the natural radiance of the mind and then the next moment and the next moment.

By retreating and retracting into self-recrimination you don't actually probably improve your performance, you probably don't become a nicer person but you cut yourself off because now you have a guilty secret to hide inside that you don't want anyone to see. {8:23} so at least half your attention goes into the cover up this is not ethical at all. It's much easier just to be straight forward. I mean in the Tibetan language there are many words for direct. *Zangtal* is one, *tokme* is another term used a lot in dzogchen and it means unimpeded. It means don't interrupt yourself, allow everything to be as it is, sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes happy, sometimes sad. Pretending there is no point to it. I have told some of you before when I lived in CR Lama's house, we worked very, very hard, but sometimes I would lie down on the bed in the daytime because I would be very tired and then he would walk by and look in the window and I would see him and I would immediately leap up, oh my god, teachers seen me that I am lazy and lying down. And he would just sort of smile, oh yeah. But I would think oh, this is not good. And it took me a long time to see that he wasn't judging me. I was judging me judging him judging me and that's a very big sandwich! If we are lazy we are lazy. If we are hardworking we're hard working. One is not better than the other although each will have its own consequences. The consequences are dynamic and moving in time but these particular attitudes or positionings are empty. If they had an essence you could put them on a scale and weigh them and say, 'here is a good deed, here is a bad deed.' One would be better and the other would be not so good.

There's a story, which many of you will know, about Potowa whose teacher was Atisha. He went to Atisha and said, "Oh I have so many negative thoughts I don't know what to do with them." So Atisha told him that he should collect some white stones and some black stones {10:38} and make piles of them in front of you and when you have a bad thought you should pick a black stone and put it in the middle and when you have a good thought you should take a white stone and put it in the middle. And at first when he practiced at the end of the session he had only black stones. Then he kept practicing and for a year he went on and on and in the end of that year he had only white stones. So he went to Atisha and he said "O, master look, now I have got a very pure mind. And what should I do now?" And Atisha said, "go back and keep practicing till

you have no stones.” (Laughter) So the emptiness of the mind, not grasping at good and bad is the essence of the practice.

So opening ourselves to others in generosity also means that sometimes we will be selfish. It's important to know what to do the you are selfish, when you are mean, when you are jealous, when all these narrow thoughts arise - what do they mean? In terms of the dharmakaya they don't mean anything at all, they don't buy a bag of buddha beans, they don't buy nothing. But it's really important to be a good person and not be a bad person - Yes, inside a particular frame of reference for particular functions. But given the fact that good and bad meet together inside us we are going to be bad as well as good. This doesn't mean that you can be bad whenever you want and do whatever you like, but it also doesn't mean that you have to persecute yourself because you do bad things. It's not about self-indulgence on the one extreme and it's not about self-persecution on the other. It's about noticing the complexity of the interactional field, this is very important because, if we relate to other people we will make mistake sometimes, we will say the wrong thing, we say things that offend other people - we don't get it right. We should be very, very sensitive about this without accumulating a scorecard, without building up some report card about our performance because if you do that you are objectifying yourself. The key task is to stay relaxed, open and present moment by moment whatever is happening so that you see and fully receive the nature of your movement and the other person's movement but without building a big story onto it. Because if we can do this it becomes much easier to maintain connection with other people.

It's the fear of offending other people or holding onto the hurt done to us by other people that gets in the way of the interaction. And of course this is more complicated because there are some people that we just don't click with, we just don't fit in, no matter what we do it's never going to be very easy. So if we are in a situation like that, we are having to work with the givenness of what is revealed, that is to say, if you start with an image of how you should be, for example you think - I am a Mahayana Buddhist I've taken the Mahayana Bodhisattva vows, I am going to work always for the sake of other people therefore I should be warm, friend, gentle, kind and so on - that's true, but to some people being kind means telling them to fuck off. That is an act of kindness. How can you know? Well you don't know for sure but it feels right at the moment. How will you know if you are succumbing to some dark urge within you? And how will know if you are being ethically connected and doing the right thing to disrupt a very unhelpful interaction? You will not know, you will have to trust, which brings you back to the practice of dzogchen. It's not about cognitive review and interpretation. It's coming to the point where two things are brought together - basic purity the underlying natural purity of the mind which is called *kadak* which means the mind is pure from the very beginning. {15:34} therefore everything which occurs in it is pure in the of being empty like a rainbow in the sky, like the reflection of the moon on water. Within this state of natural purity there is the emergence of energy, effortlessly arising or spontaneous display what's called *lhundrup* these two are inseparable by recognising the natural purity of your mind you can engage in spontaneity. If you slip out of the natural state of purity, what you think is fresh, clear, spontaneity is stale old karmic habitual impulsivity. They are very close and they are very different. The key thing is to be in the relaxed open state of awareness, then you can really relax but if you relax when you're

up your arse in narrow ego centrality then you're going to get lost. So the work again and again is always to bring together relaxation and openness and very precise attention to the developing field and how we move between these two.

Tonglen 1

So the practice we can do is one that some of you know it's a form of what's called *tonglen* its basically a Mahayana practice but we do it integrating emptiness, so we do it in a dynamic way. *Tong* means to give and *len* to take. In our usual ego self what we want to give is things we don't want and what we want to take is things we do want. We pull the good towards us and push the bad away. The practice on *tonglen* is to reverse this. We give out the good and we take in the bad. We give out the good infinitely because the centre of our heart is just one letter Aa which is the infinity of emptiness. The heart is like a cornucopia, a wish fulfilling horn, a wish-fulfilling jewel, a site of ceaseless production. We have infinite warmth and love and hope to give out into the world, there is no end to it because what is arising is the form of emptiness itself. So out of emptiness in the heart infinite rays of light spread out to all sentient beings touching them and giving them whatever they wish. And we'll do this in a physical way, I'll demonstrate in a minute. We do this for some time and then we reverse it and imagine from all sentient beings in all directions in all the different realms come all their misery, difficulties, troubles, sicknesses and so on, coming towards us in the form of dark sooty water. This is a bit prejudiced now they say bats, frogs and so on. Bats like each there and even kiss and so any image you have that represents something dark and poisonous and dangerous.

And we invite this into our own heart. So how can so much grief come into my heart? Well, it depends whose heart it is. If it is the heart the small pot you're in trouble, you're in trouble. But you were in trouble if you took the Bodhisattva vow because you say I will save all sentient beings. That's a very big cheque to write. {2:47} So Buddhism always says do more than you can. Leap beyond yourself, leap out of the box you're living in. So all this misery is coming, what will happen, won't I get filled up? No because the heart is like the sky the infinite sky outside and the space in the heart is the same. All of the negativity comes in and passes into the middle of the heart and dissolves into emptiness. So we are ceaselessly dissolving the negativity in space.

And then again we reverse and we offer out rays of light, rainbow coloured light out to all beings. And we do this cycle of giving and receiving several times and we support ourselves in this by making the sound of Aa. Aa is the primordial sound, the basic sound, the heart of emptiness, the heart of all the buddhas and it represents absolute purity. So the light we send out is good and empty. The light we receive is difficult and dangerous and empty. Emptiness is the ground, the basis, the actuality and the others are light colourations of this, they have no real essence of their own. So this is the heart of the practice.

If you don't feel like doing this particular practice or any of the other practises - you don't have to do it you can just sit quietly. But there is a usefulness in this because it brings us into the point where we have to keep opening, we have to keep opening. So it's a way of shifting out of

being small and restricted and self-referential, to recognising that is like a carapace it's like a shell around us which keeps us on one level safe but very, very restricted. And if we crack open the shell we start to feel the infinity of the movement. Infinite going out, infinite coming in, and so it's like as they say in many of the dzogchen texts we should meditate sky to sky. The sky of the heart and the sky of the universe ceaselessly merging and pulsating together with no difference between them.

Tonglen 2

Just start to make the sound of Aa and it comes as a continuous stream and it really supports us in what we do. So as you're sending out the light you're going out from your heart, and spreading out all around you and out and round and out and round. And you do this for some time, then you reverse the hand and you go out and you gather into your heart all this hurt and pain and sorrow are gathering in and gathering in - all the time making the continuous sound of Aa. Make the changes between the positive and the negative as often as you like and then we will gradually gently come to an ending and end on sending out the positive light, that's probably better. Sending out the positive light at the end and then we just stand for a while and then sit.

Experience

So we have been looking a bit at the way the view of dzogchen is rather a different from our general way of looking in our western countries. It's really a radically different paradigm. Part of this has to do with the nature of agency - what we see as being the ground of experience or the ground of activity, for example most recently in the papers in Britain, a policewoman had been called out to a garage in night time because they thought there had been some kind of theft. And she arrived and it was a bit dark and she stumbled over the pavement and fell down. Then later she sued the owner of the garage for damaging her. And he said, "you're a policewoman why didn't you come with a torch - what are you thinking about?" And then they found out that many, many policemen had been suing people because of accidents that happened on the job. And older policemen are saying, "this is very strange." And now you get many soldiers suing the government for having put them in danger. This is strange. A hundred and fifty years ago you can't imagine a soldier saying, "it's terrible that people should shoot at me. How dare you put me in that situation." Because all the soldiers nowadays are volunteers.

So there is a sense of a kind of victim culture that our lives should be good, we are entitled to happiness and if bad things happen it's someone's else's fault, someone can be blamed. So in that sense the locus of the control of our lives is projected out onto bad people and we are entitled to a compensation for bad things. This view is very, very prevalent in Britain at the moment. {02:00} From the point of view of dzogchen all experience is the radiance of our mind which means to say that everything is experience there are no solid entities, there is just this continuous stream of experience.

Now of course you could say that there are things out there, clearly this building was here before we arrived we came from our various home places and arrived in this small town and came in through the front entrance into Kamalashila. In that sense it would, be ridiculous to say that Kamalashila is a creation of our mind. We haven't created it out of nothing at all and in that way in an objectifying sense we can say we are experiencing something which exists in itself but as we were looking yesterday, the view of dzogchen would indicate, we are experiencing what we experience. That's what we can attend to - nature of our experience. To impute that there is a real substantial thing outside there, that our conceptualisation gives us direct access to, is a fallacy. And it's a fallacy that arises from the separation from the subject and object. What we experience here is the immediacy of our perception, which is light, of our hearing which is sound, of our touch which is sensation which is then interpreted by us. It is the activity of our own mind which is cooking the raw materials,{04:03} and the cooking is almost simultaneous with the raw materials.

So in relation to death we want to think we'll first of all what is life? Life from the point of view of dzogchen the radiance of our mind displaying different fields or different realms of experience. These experiences arise as this interplay of the basic potential of the energy of existence or the energy of our mind like colour and so on integrating with, or in conversation with our particular tendencies. So we have our own unique specific experience in any situation. On an outer form we know that some people like some kinds of music other people don't like that music. Why is that? Surely. The music's good, the person who likes that music will say, " it's really good you should listen to it again, you didn't get it. No listen to it it's good." " I don't like it." " yeah but it's good." So in this sense our tendency is to see the goodness as lying in the object and that if the subject has to change to get object in the right way. But each of us in a subject can only get things in our way. Because, our structure is like a crystal prism and this prism can have many flaws in it or not many flaws in it. Flaw of course is already our judgement. There can be various fissures or cracks or sub faces inside the prism. When the basic light of experience or if you like the raw material encounters the prism. There is a refraction into specificity of our experience that we are drawn to some things and not to others. Some things become figure and other things receded into the background. So actually we are not in contact with the same field of experience as other people. We live in a shared potential but we don't live in shared experience because our experience is mediated through our own tendencies.

Like it says many times in the texts, everything is the same in the dharmakaya the basic openness of the mind is the same for everyone. In terms of our experience of the potential of display this already has some variations. Which is to say the sambhogakaya or the field of enjoyment, has some particular qualities embedded within it. It's the basis for different Buddhas have different pure lands with different qualities in them, because these pure lands are generated out of the original bodhisattva vow of the Buddha many many aeons ago, and due to their accumulation of merit and wisdom they generate this potential field of experience that they invite others to share. {07:35} and it carries the particular characteristic of their intention. So even on that level there is particularisation and in terms of manifesting there is a great deal of particularisation.

Again the point is here, you cannot escape from your role in the creation of the world, because the only world you have access to is your world. This is what you get however you are, if you have a happy disposition or a complaining disposition, if you gossip a lot, if you're quiet whatever it is - that's how you are and you get whatever you get from that. It's not a case of saying its right or wrong, but it's a case of really inhabiting that and inhabiting it as the dynamic formation of energy manifest. So this is the radiance of the mind, this is coming from the mind into the world. It's not coming from me as a quality of a person, rather what I call I myself the person is the radiance of awareness as it is mediated through the structures which have arisen, through process of our birth.

So according to the tradition at the end of the death process if you're going to be born as a human being, the basic potential consciousness, finds itself, seeing a couple having sex and is drawn into that site of intercourse. As it comes in there the energy of the consciousness meets the white essence of the father and the red essence of the mother and this spins together and the white essence goes up and the red essence goes down and it forms a kind of mid line along which the development of the foetus occurs. This white and red essence continues through our lives, the White essence is in the head and the red essence is just below the navel. And at the time of death they come together and they meet in the heart that's the final point of the exit of consciousness from the body.

So a situation is evolves as dynamic unfolding of potential and you can see these incredible films now of the development of the foetus in the womb - unbelievable these changes that are occurring and the head and the spin just this unfolding of potential and when the baby comes out of the mothers body it's changing and changing and changing and all our lives we've been changing in these ways. Changing due to the arising of what we call internal circumstances, our health, how good our heart is, how good our lungs are, whether we develop diabetes and so on. And this again is in a conversation with external factors. So the body is a conversation, the field of experience is a conversation, it's the exchange of information which is of course is energy. Energy here is not some transpersonal mystical notion it's the immediate vitality of our lives which we can feel.

So space which is filled with presence that is to say, we are just there - is not dull and dead, it's not an empty space but it's filled with its own light, the light of emptiness. In Sanskrit {11:55} it's called *dhatu prakash*, this is the natural light of the mind. This light reveals itself as our experience. The light can be dulled when it's mediated through our addiction to thought, our addiction to feeling, these become like a muffled zone or distorting veil which creates the sense that the light is outside ourselves. This is the fundamental alienation in which we come to feel that we are dependent and in need of something other than ourselves. Here of course language is very, very, problematic because if we say we feel the need for something other than ourselves we have to be very clear as to who is the *we*, we are talking about. Our identity is simultaneously open and closed we are both open and present and we are caught up in our stuff. In the caught up in our stuffiness is the action reaction formation which generates the particular planes of cracking inside the prism which when the light comes in refracts it in our particular patterns.

So some people have a shitty childhood and they grow up and think wow I'm glad that's over and they get on with their life. Other people have a shitty childhood and it becomes the story of their existence and they are always talking about what happen to me, how difficult it was, and that shouldn't have happened. When you're in a situation like the latter case the inability to drop the past means you are your past. And if you are your past all the events, the wounds like bruises around the heart pervade the body so that as you are engage in the field of interactive experience you resonate with the vibration of the meeting of the past event, let's call it a trauma a because it's very popular now - everything's a trauma - the past trauma and the current experience. So a present moment which is arising maybe doesn't not very nice and gone, is now intensified because it becomes a subset of this story of the horror of my existence. The big vibration starts, "oh my god - how could you do that, this should not happen." And that. Intensity of course knocks us into more reification more self-referential thinking and more wariness of the environment, what's going on? What's going to happen next? That's a tragic situation to be in, many people get trapped in that.

So in the practice general Buddhist practice there is a lot of emphasis on purification. Purification means letting go and releasing the attachment to the echoes of the past, the echoes of karma, the echoes of situations where things happen to us because as long as our experience mediated through these lenses, filters, veils we lack the refreshing quality of the naked new moment. We are always a bit dull always a bit disappointed a bit sad because we are not quite there. The more we get impacted by experience and we take that impact in a solid way it causes a kind of fragmentation. If you were to take a beautiful clear crystal and a small hammer and just keep tapping it, gradually it will get a bit opaque a bit cloudy because there will be so many planes refracting the light inside. This is what happens when we have a lot of trauma and we hold onto it. We have clarity, so a bit like in a pinball machine, you play it in pubs and so on. When the ball goes in it starts bouncing off the rubber, bing, bing, bing, bing, Bing. So our experience starts to ricochet round like a crazy bullet in a room setting off all sort of old potentials which in themselves don't have very much to do with the current stimulus but because of the lack of clarity and directness in ourselves you get an internal relational movement.

This is one of the things that is prevalent in psychoanalysis these early enquirers into free association and particular CG Jung's exploration of word association tests which he found that there was quite a, there were variations in the time lag between the word being offered and the associated word arriving according to the amity of mental processing that was going on. And this was usually linked to some kind of resistance; some kind of I can't go there. So that illustrates a simple experience arises but it's too much for us so we shoot off the side and that sidereal movement has us banging into to something else, then banging into something else. And this is what creates the kind of maelstrom the chaotic dynamic movement of our ordinary life.

So in dzogchen, relaxing and opening we seek to just rest in the space within which experience is occurring, experience is the play of open spaciousness. It's not coming from anywhere and if we are clear about this, then we are not frightened by what is coming. We know what it is before it arrives. In the tantric system you know what everything is before it arrives because it's

Padmasambhava, or its Tara, it already has a name. In dzogchen tradition, we know what it is because there is only one place it comes from. There is only one factory for all this stuff this is the dharmadhatu. In our awareness and the dharmadhatu are completely studied together. So everything is radiance of the dharmadhatu. We can experience this more and more the less we rely on cognition to make sense of things. That is to say, we stand always in the practice, always at a crossroads between innate meaning, or intrinsic value and the kind of meaning which is generated through interpretation. The idea that we have to make sense of what is going on and then we will generate a theory and then with that theory we will be able to explicate, explain many different kinds of phenomena, which will give us a sense of mastery and control. {20:08} but what happens then is that you become a kind of magus - you're a magician who is manipulating signs and symbols to create a phantom in the sky.

Now we have all this information and then we die. Nobel Prize Winner in physics terribly intelligent people with huge planes of understanding (James clicks his fingers) and then they're dead. And what does all this physics help them when they die? Nothing because it's a series of thoughts. In the process of the death, thought closes, thought closes, thought closes, thought closes and then there's nothing. So in the dharma texts they always say - don't leave life empty handed. You have to know what you are allowed to take with you when you go. If you go on the airlines now you can't take liquids on the plane and you have to have a piece of hand baggage not more than ten kilos. You take more they want to charge you a lot of money. When you dies] you can't take your thoughts with you, you can't take your partner, your children, your house, your money your furniture, you can't take your memories, you can't take your intelligence, you can't take your body. There is not very much that goes with you.

So while building up huge accumulations of stuff which is very good for this kind of wheeler-dealer funny business of surviving in the world today we accumulate a vision in which obscurantism is called clarity and clarity is called obscurantism. From the point of view of dharma this is frightening and shocking, from the point of view of worldly life it's irrelevant. So the heart of what we are wanting to do to recognise our own nature. You can read many books about this you can get many teachings about this but only you yourself can be present with yourself. It's not a piece of information you add on to your life. It's not a skill that you develop. It's simply being yourself. And it's not something that can be developed through practice. As we were looking yesterday the practice is designed to drop, to help us to drop the artificiality the natural is already there. There is a basic goodness, this is Kuntuzangpo - the already always good.

So in order to do this we take up there familiar questions that many of you have looked at many times, where does the mind come from? Where does the mind stay? Where does the mind go to? Does the mind have any shape or colour? Does it have any height or dimension? That is to say, in samsara we operate as if we were something, we don't quite know what we are but we take it that we are some sort of a thing. When we look at the people we think, oh that's Mary, that's John and so on. They exist as something and with that we tend to impute some kind of essence - "oh yeah Mary well she's like that. Of course she says that she always does." We know what Mary is like because there is a truth a little homunculus of Mary inside her that generates Mary-ness.

So when we do this practice we are looking for exactly that, the little person inside who is our true self. Maybe it's our so-called 'inner child', one of the strangest notions to enter the world of psychology.

Trusting my inner voice

Question: How can I trust myself how can I trust my inner voice {24: 48} come to myself as the truth?

James: That's a very, very good question. Trusting - it's a very good question isn't it? Because say I say I don't trust myself I have to look for someone I can't trust. So now I have to look for someone I can trust and I have to trust that I am able to trust them because they are more trustworthy than me. So you're already trusting yourself except your trusting yourself as a slave. We always trust ourselves. Even the person who going to kill themselves today and there will be many, I trust that the meaning of my life is over. I trust that I know that my life is fucked so I am going to kill myself. So the issue is, how can we know if we are going wrong? We have a very good litmus test, a very good precise test here. When we look for mind, if something is reliably there it will always be there. So we are sitting looking - where does my mind stay? My mind feels some kind of sensation, so it feels to be here - maybe it's in the brain. So I now I know my mind is in my brain. So I'm sitting there and another thought comes and I am full of another thought. So the answer which seems to real has vanished. If this is my real nature and it's who I actually am the presence of it should continue.

So whenever ever we get a situationally evoked conclusion as the situation changes it will vanish. This is why our mind is always busy. So that's why it's says the dharmakaya is unchanging. Once you start to taste it's, oh - it's always the same, it's always the same. So thoughts and feelings the interpretations and speculations we can have change and vary and that is the proof of them not being the real thing. The energy arising from the ground but they are not the ground itself. It's a bit like with the traditional image of the mirror. The mirror itself doesn't change but what it shows changes all the time. So if you look in the mirror and say, " huh mirror there is a picture of me, mum look come and look I'm in the mirror." She says " ok move aside." " No I'm in the mirror." " But I was in the mirror mum - no you're getting in the way." So the reflections are always filling the mirror and that's when we look for our mind and we think I am this I am that I am that. We cling to the reflection and say it's the mirror.

The difficult thing is this, because if it were easy we would already have rainbows coming out of our noses. The difficult thing is - you never see the mirror without the reflection. So if we're looking for some true hidden essence something we can hold on to we don't find it. So it's not about looking like a detective tracing some kind of clues in order to now ah ha - I've got you. Rather it's relaxing into the state of the mirror and all these thoughts, feelings and sensations are arising through the spaciousness of our mind. Our mind is the space - it's not a thing. So whenever when we get a thing as the answer we'll know that it's not true because it won't remain but the space is what is the one dimension of our being.

So again and again we relax and open thoughts feeling sensation come. With just being present with them without following after them without trying to control them gradually we experience we are the space within which the experience is occurring. Because the experience is after experience after experience is arising and I'm here. I'm not here as someone in particular. I'm not here in a way that can be defined - I am the radiance the nature clarity which is up graspable yet manifesting experience after experience after experience. So that's the way of proceeding.

Sometimes it looks easy, sometimes it looks very, very hard. It's hard because we have a lot of attachment to phenomena as being strongly real. It's not that there is a polarised dichotomy between phenomena and numina - some kind of pure insubstantial essence somewhere with this gross outer form, it's the dualistic vision - it's that form is emptiness and emptiness is form. Consciousness is emptiness, emptiness is consciousness. Whatever arises is inseparable from this space. So it's not that we clear away all this stuff and then we have this pristine space it's that the spaciousness of the mind is shown through the richness and diversity of what arises in it. Just as the quality of a mirror is its capacity to show reflections. We see the mirror in the reflection or on the reflection, not by removing the reflection but the very facticity of the mirror-ness of the mirror is the reflection. The mind shows itself in its own radiant clarity. We never find it as a thing but we find ourselves in the openness which is the ground clarity which is showing whatever is going on.

Anyway that's the idea. So now we try this a little bit. So we start in the usual way just relaxing the outbreath and open and then of course experience is continuing. We are looking who is the one who is experiencing this? Who is the experienced? Does the experiencer rest some Place? Does it have a shape? Does it go anywhere? Does it come from anywhere? Just very gently put into questions the assumptions that arise around this.

The ego

That's an enquiry you can do again and again and again. It's the most direct route to both seeing the nature of assumptions that you have about your core identity and liberating yourself from them. Are there any thoughts or questions about that?

Question: I am unable to understand the question.

James: No? The ego is like a whirlpool. In the great ocean of existence a little spin occurs - and what is that spin made of? The water of the whirlpool is no different from the water of the ocean but as it spins it seems to take on a substance of its own and it certainly has power because if a small boat goes into a big whirlpool it can be sucked down. So the ego is a constellation of our energy. Just as depression is. It's not a thing is not a substance but it's a organising principle. So if the basis of myself organisation is - *what about me?* Then in every situation I go into *what about me?* Becomes the way of thinking about what is occurring. The importance of the things in the world is determined by their relevance to my distance. So when I was first doing the mandala offerings that are part of the basic practice, CR lama said the very first thing you should

offer is America - he said no one likes America, you don't live in America, nothing to do with you - offer America. (laughter) It's always easy to offer things that have nothing to do with you. And when you get a bit more confident you can start to offer your house, your family, your girlfriend and then your own body.

Because our self-referential thing is not just a kind of a centripetal force, it's not just drawing everything back into the middle. It's also causing us to have a very distorted veil of what is around us. So the selective attention that goes with a self-referential view gives us a very particular sense of the world which then tends to continue our habitual patterns of mobilisation. So if you're interested in motor car racing this is a nice place to come because there is a track near here and you could go and visit it, and if you're not interested in motor car racing it's irrelevant it's as just it doesn't exist.

So that's what the ego is, it's a particular kind or triage mechanism a sorting out mechanism which ascribes importance to the general plane of experience. So it's about judgement, relevance to me, so it operates in opposition to equanimity :{04:04} a sense of one taste to the equal value of all phenomena. And that's why it's disturbing. Of course we live in a body and this body will have particular likes and dislikes. So CR Lama liked wonton soup, he liked wild strawberries, he liked avocados. Namkhai Norbu likes Brunello di Montalcino - {laughter} that's what they like. There is nothing wrong with liking something it doesn't mean you have a big ego because you like something. In this world there are so many things you have to choose something. It's what is our relation to the something that we choose. Do we die if don't have it? Do we become upset if we don't have it? Is there a kind of real disturbance? So the amount of importance which is put into the choices we have which makes the ego very intense.¹ And which can help us to see when we are getting lost. So if we have a light construe a light organisation about our lives then we can go with circumstances but if it's very tight then it becomes a problem. Both because we will both have more suffering and disappointment because we win at get what we want and also because it's likely to make us controlling of other people. And when we get into that situation we become a bit hot and irritated because other people are doing things the wrong way and that of course increases our disappointment and frustration. Why have I in this life got to be with people who are complete arseholes? (laughter) A fairly common feeling. And so everything becomes a little bit tense and the ideal that these people are making a mess of my life are in fact the radiance of the dharmakaya. Once you enter into judgement the door to openness is closed. And that's a danger with the ego that it tries to organise what is going on by making strong judgements

So it's a defensive structure which is blind but thinks it's clear. I know how to protect myself, I need to check out all that is going on and evaluate things so that I get more good things less bad things. And inside the realm of duality that makes a lot of sense. It's very rare for us to have enough power to make things happen exactly on our terms and moreover, more importantly from a meditators point of view, that perception means that we are rejecting a lot of the *stuff* that we need to integrate if we are to understand form and emptiness. So my defence puts me

in danger. I don't know in Germany but in Britain the main dangerous years for men are seventeen to twenty five. It's the time there is most violent attack on men. And young men at that age in London, especially in the area where I work, they tend to have very short hair. They wear a particular kind of check shirt made by Ben Sherman, jeans and they walk - " don't fuck with me, don't fuck with me." Now as we know in the animal species when someone's doing this - someone else says " well you want a fight?" (Laughter) and so they don't fuck with me becomes - " come on then." (Laughter). And so you get a lot of violence. It's very difficult to have a defence which is not a provocation.

So I'm going to carry a knife with me because I don't want anyone to attack me and someone thinks "wow - I've got a bigger knife - your dangerous. I'm only safe if I kill the person who might kill me." So you get a whole escalation of a paranoid field. We understand this in general social life. {09:00} but it's the same structure here that the very defence that develops from the ego - for the ego puts it in danger. The basic notion of how we come to exist in this world in a state of lostness is that ignorance occurs in a sudden moment which the open field is lost there's a kind of contraction there's a "O". There's a shock, the shock causes a retraction and then in the next moment - what happened? Of that happened. And there comes an interpretive structure which helps us to make sense of what has gone on ha no this leads to endless elaboration.

So that the first shock in that first moment - I'm frightened where I am - so in the tradition they say it's like someone lying in bed having a nightmare. In the bedroom there is no danger, no one is attacking them nobody's doing anything unhelpful they are safe in their own little bed asleep begging frightened. There is no real cause for the fear. So safety and fear are coexisting, so this level is called co emergent ignorance it means the ground which is always open and the seemingly defensive gesture which is a closure are simultaneous. They are in the same place at the same time. The night are in the warm bed. You follow the nightmare to make sense if it and you start to elaborate and get what's called the ignorance of organisation or the ignorance of naming, the ignorance which gives an explanation which makes meaning.. So it's a very rapid development of mental functioning to secure the territory. " Huhhhh now I know what's going on. " I relax - I relax inside an illusory palace of mental constructs and this then gives rise to the third mode of ignorance which is the ignorance of not understanding karma. Because inside this realm of security everything I do is generating more illusions, more fantasies, more patterns. So I feel safe or at least I feel to a certain extent in charge of my life but every move I make further extends the walls of the prison.

So in the practice when we relax and open we are seeking to see that primal moment because it's not in time from long, long ago, it's a moment which is always here, openness and closure they are both present. You are sitting in the practice a thought comes and it catches you, the being caught is happening in the warm bed. The relaxed openness of the mind is the theatre stage on which the melodrama of me being enmeshed in a thought is occurring. Stage is open the melodrama is intense. We are so mesmerised by the melodrama that all we see is the knife - "Ahhhhhh" and we travel away with all these thoughts. The fact that it's a theatre, the fact that it's an open space of unfolding experience, there's this than that, then that, then that is forgotten because we are in it. So that's what the ego is, the ego is the point of individual self-

identification which is constantly creating its house out of whatever is to hand. It's constantly pulling in new experiences and saying *this is me, this is me, this is me*.

So the constant construction of the sense of self of the continuity of a sense of self by identification with whatever is going on. Just as say you have the image of the mirror. In the mirror you turn it around in the room and you see many different reflections and each reflection is saying it's me, it's me, it's me. Because if I had a big mirror here and I did that, each person here could look in the mirror and say, "hi, it's me, it's me, it's me." And that would be true for each of them. We do this internally, the ego does it with anything, I'm hungry, tired, I need a pee, I'm in love with you, I hate you. All sort of things we completely fully identify with moment-by-moment as if that transient situationally derived moment was our true essence. We speak a hundred percent.

So that's the nature of the ego, it's not a thing it's a particular shimmering quality which when you look for it you don't find any essence in it but because it's energetic it's impactful of the other aspects of the field of emergence.

Question: so meditation is the function to beat down a little bit the operation of ego.

James: exactly just to see that it's dynamic because the ego is claiming this is me as if all of these are examples of me. So we write on a piece of paper - apple - and we take this into a big, big fruit market somewhere in Frankfurt - in Delhi they had a hundred kinds of apples. And you walk around and you show this to the apple and if the apple could speak, each apple says "I'm an apple, I'm an apple, I'm an apple." So we now know they are all an apple but apple is written on a piece of paper it's an abstraction. Each of these apples taste differently. Their apple-ness extrapolates them from the immediacy of their phenomenological being into some shimmering thing floating in the air, which doesn't actually exist. Because say can you give me an apple - you get this particular apple. There is always a unique specificity to each moment of existence and the ego functions as an organiser on the basis of abstraction. And abstraction is alienation and dualism. So the very way it protects us as it were, is by harming us. Because the more you take care of yourself the more you become alienated from yourself. This is the terrible paradox. So it's not that you can cut off the ego and get rid of it, the ego has to be welcomed as part of the family so that it can take on its proper function which is simply to be the point at which we interact with the world.

Process of dying

The basic view in dzogchen is that our bodies and the world around us are built out of the five elements and the basis of these elements is light itself. So there are a lot of practices of light with different colours which represents the elements and by purifying the elements we start to see the world as an experiment of light.

So as we move into the death process what we have is the gradual thinning of the glue that holds the five elements together. When we're in a healthy state the elements are in balance and so were able to perform the various tasks we have a sturdiness we have a solidity to us, but we also have flexibility, we have warmth which manifests in enthusiasms and also provides enough support for our internal organs. We have the wind element which is the more subtle mortality which allows the body to be deeply flexible and we have space. When we get sick, one way of thinking about that would be to see an imbalance of the elements. You can see that in terms of physical illnesses and of psychiatric or mental health issues as well.

So depression is clearly an excess of the water element where there is a lot of sinking a dissolving of the sense of the frame of life. Not enough heat the person can't mobilise themselves, they want to lie in bed, they don't want to open letters, so the proactive movement out towards engagement beckons more difficult because one of the things about the water element is it loses shape so you become dissolved in yourself, you can't get yourself together. If someone develops something like obsessive-compulsive disorder where they feel driven to keep checking whether the door is locked or they have to keep washing their hands again and again, or keep cleaning the house. Clearly this is heat and fire operating and there is an absence of earth because they can't set a boundary to themselves, they can't make a decisive statement to myself, "I've cleaned my hands my hands are clean - end of story." But the wind whips it up "yes but what if, I need to and I have too" and they find themselves washing and washing and washing. You can apply that kind of diagnosis right across the board, you can apply it with physical conditions as well which tend to have to do with imbalances in the flow of communication which is the body. The endocrine system is getting confused the wrong kind of messages are going, the heart is not giving an adequate pressure to get the blood circulating well. The pathways going through gets narrowed, we say because of deposits, so you're getting earth where there needs to be space. The blood is not being able to get through the channels easily. Somehow we manage to make some kind of reparation or we get some angle which helps us as far as possible to rebalance our elements.

Of course on an outer level we need to be attentive to the changes of the seasons, it makes sense to eat different food in the winter from the summer because the requirements for heat are more in the winter. To wear the right kinds of clothing recognise what is an enemy and what is a friend. We have a huge rise in the levels of skin cancer because people think lying in the sun and getting a suntan is good, which is good for the ego but not very good for the skin and the skin starts to protest. A lot of the maintenance of health has to do with not just being concerned about oneself in one's body but the relationship of the body to the world. Getting enough sleep, drinking enough water, having a balanced diet, being careful about how you proceed in the world. What kind of risky sports you engage in, what kind of stress you put yourself under at work, for example, many young people when they are striving for promotion or job security, if they are in competitive industry like in the city in a commercial bank they work extra-long hours pushing themselves very hard. Because of success which is a delayed gratification and in the midst of that they are not getting enough sleep they're very high stress levels, they usually don't eat very well and they're having to swallow a lot of unpleasant experiences as an unpleasant boss grinds them down. And of course all of that has a body impact after some time.

So there are many different ways of which because of some mental plan, some map in our head we can act against the interest in our body. We can decide to do an activity because we feel "that's what I want to do, I've always done that" but maybe you haven't done it for a while. So if you take very, very vigorous exercise and you haven't had exercise for a while you're likely to get ill. These things are very sad, it's not uncommon because the map in the persons head is "of course I can do that. I did it years ago. I'm good at that." Did it years ago - a whole set of changes have occurred in the body since that time.

So at various stages in our life we are more healthy and less healthy. Even when we get a bit sick, it often doesn't lead us to an awareness of the incredible vulnerability of our human situation. We have these water bubble eyes - with one pencil you can take the out very quickly. That's done by cruel people. Where I was living with my teacher in Bengal, the going rate at that time to pay a local thug to have someone blinded was fifty rupees. {07:26} Hurting people is very cheap in many countries in the world and once you destroy a bit of someone's body they are not the same. It's easy to be cruel because the body is very sensitive, very vulnerable. There are many nerve endings which if you know where they are you can cause excruciating pain to someone. It's very easy to harm people's bodies.

So, this body will die it has never been secure, it's not a stable situation. As we get older we become frail, we become fearful because of that frankness. As you get older if you fall and you break your hip, it's not good news, it takes a long time to heal. The body energy which offers repair goes down through time. When my youngest son was born he had a misplacement of the main arteries in his body there were the wrong way round and he had to have a major operation when he was eight days old and that was a very powerful and sad experience. But anyway he survived, he's doing ok now, but what was incredible was that the process of healing was so incredibly quick. Once he had settled down a little bit the healing was fantastic. If such a thing were to happen to me the healing would be very much longer because if I have cut on my arm, a month goes by, two months goes by it's not really healing. How is this? Because the life energy is starting to go down, this is inevitable. So we see it by various small signs see difficulties that once we could have taken in our stride - "Ah this is going to be more of a problem."

As we move into the death process as I said, the glue holding the five elements together starts to weaken and this shows itself in various registers according to the kind of condition that is causing the death this will of course manifest in different ways. If someone is in a car crash or some sudden trauma like that, you get a very quick collapse. If your dying slowly from a degenerative disease it's very different. Somebody I know died recently and she had a degenerative disease which meant she was moving towards death through paralysis - everything was closing down for her. And so in that case the wind element is the first to go. The wind element as the way of thinking about the flexibility of the movement of the limbs started to lose her balance, so she had to walk with a stick then go with a little vehicle, then couldn't direct the vehicle, then gradually everything closed down. Difficulties with speaking impossible to move her hands, then you have a terrible situation that someone is lying in a bed, and if their hair falls across their face, the nerve ending are there but they can't move. And they can hardly indicate to someone else. So the smallest thing can bring the most excruciating pain. So there are many dreadful

possibilities which lies ahead of us (laughter) make hay whilst the sun shines. Now you have a chance you have a healthy human body, this is time to do practice, as it says in many of the texts - don't wait till your old, don't wait till your retire, because when you retire your body may retire at the same time and you may not have the energy and clarity to do these things.

But generally in the Tibetan texts the sequence is described as the earth element starts to dissolve into the water element which means that the precision or the definition that comes to the structuring of our existence starts to weaken, which means that the body becomes very heavy because the earth element supporting us weakens, so as the earth dissolves in the water element, the water becomes turgid, thickens like thick mud and mobility/movement goes down so there's a heaviness. "I don't want to get out of bed." "Come on - move." "I don't want to move." Very often as people get older the last thing they want to do is move - because "why would I move? I'm happy here, leave me, leave me." So there you can see a kind of panoramic weakening of the force of the elements.

According to the tradition the death process starts when the outer aspect of the earth element starts to dissolve into water and the power of the body to move subsides. Then the water element starts to go into the fire element bringing fluctuations in body temperature. The body moves between being hot and cold. {13:59} At that time tears may arise, the nose might be running but the lips are getting dry. They can no longer wet their own lips and the wind element necessary for swallowing subsides. The breath becomes finer and finer until it ceases moving.

Parallel with this is the movement between the white essence and the red essence. So it's their polarity or the if you like the dialectic between them which keeps the energetic pulse of the body and the White element from the father goes down into the heart, the red element from the mother comes up into the heart where they meet at the central point in the heart which is the point where awareness manifests as the heart chakra. At that point the mind becomes very dull and moves towards unconsciousness. And then the more subtle form of the white and red essence comes down in the heart and at that time the awareness manifests as the experience of dharmata which is to say, all the functions of ordinary consciousness dissolve. There is a great darkness and in that darkness like the first light of dawn there is the arising of awareness. And then the bardo experience starts.

You move from the bardo of death to the bardo of dharmata, of actually, of the basic state of existence which is the inseparability of awareness and dharmadhatu. So the field if you like of the object and the field of the subject are now completely integrated. In that state, nothing at all. Then this light comes, and in that light you can recognise your own nature as the dharmakaya which is the first potential of liberation. If because for example you have no meditation experience nothing at all is both a bit scary and there's nothing to do with it - you can't settle into it because you're always used to moving. This brings in the next stage the arising of sound and light. The light comes in pulses and little moving balls, sound comes in at first sweet melodic pulsations - you have the arising of the peaceful deities. You can read the *Tibetan book of the dead* there are many beautiful descriptions of these and they fill the space around you and their saying 'welcome come here. Hello - how are you?' If you have had an initiation into that

mandala they call you by the name that you had at the time of the initiation. But if you've no relation with them and you are frightened in the process of death then there's a kind of wariness. Tibetan descriptions are not as nice as new age descriptions. New age descriptions are talking about the white light- something very, very beautiful. That's just the first room in the big house. When that door opens into the next room it gets a little bit more scary. So these peaceful deities are around for a while then they go, then the wrathful deities come with all kinds of intense sounds like thunder, roaring at which point mostly we retract which is why the practice of wrathful deities is recommended, so you get used to seeing something that looks dangerous but is not dangerous. Therefore trust your knowledge that this dangerous looking form is the sight of blessing and so you go forward into it and you merge into the heart of the wrathful forms then central of one is Chemchok Heruka and there you find liberation in the sambhogakaya.

If that doesn't happen then the next stage is that you go on out of that and you leave that state by falling unconscious. This is a very dark unconscious, again if you recognise a state of no thought, if you've meditated particularly doing dark retreats and you're used to just sitting, nothing is happening, it's completely open, peaceful nothing is happening, then again there is the possibility of liberation. But if you're agitated because nothing's happening "what's going to happen? What's going to happen." The usual way in which the conceptualising mind leaps ahead of itself then you find yourself entering into the possibility of a new form of the body. And how that arises is dependent on which bit of your karma manifests at that time. So the instruction for meditators is at this time you have to gather all the good karma you can into the strongest possible intention - I want a human birth I want to work for the benefit of beings and so on - and the formulation of that intention gives you the chance to gain that birth otherwise whatever thought arises in your mind, if you merge in that thought it takes you into another domain.

In the texts it describes that the mind because it has no substance can travel a thousand miles in a second, must not be obstructed by anything. So you can go into any of the different realms any of the different possibilities. Then as the different realms have different forms you can find yourself enclosed in an egg like shape or you can go into the womb of higher creatures and so on. And then you live in that situation. And we know when a baby is born that they have been in a strange place. They have been in a very dark place with all kinds of experiences going on. They have no, as far as we know, they have no conceptual apparatus for making sense of it, so they are having a lot of experience which is very impactful. If that experience is not pleasant it's very difficult. So Tibetan texts, for example *Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of liberation*, describe the baby in the womb as experiencing with the opening with the sense organs as if they are being poked with a hot broken burning iron. Now we don't think that and the kind of scans we do of babies don't seem to indicate that - however in a sense metaphorically it speaks of the absolute helplessness of the foetus in the womb, there is no way of protecting itself at all. And so if there is a lot of distress going round, if there are some chemicals getting through the protective barriers, if there is agitation in the mother, a lot of consumption of alcohol and so on, all kinds of forces can come to bear on the development of the foetus. And of course if you are reborn as an animal, as a bird there are many predators, or as a worm or an insect the span of life is very short, many things want to kill you, many of the resources you need are rare. For example the

population of bees in Europe is diminishing all the time because of changes in insecticides although the big chemical companies dispute this, we know that the number the number of creatures that are able to pollinate the crops is going down and down and down. So that means that that possible environment for being reborn is vanishing. So instead of being a little bee then you end up as a slug - "I want to be a bee."

Faith and logic

Question: I'm always wondering how high lamas can make these experiences and tell because I really don't know anybody who came back from there. So how can we really be sure this stories we read in the 'Tibetan book of the dead' are really what we will experience after our death

James: The way you know it is true is that you have two hands, you put one hand in front of the other and you say, "O it's true." That's how you know it's true - it's a belief system because in the European system we have {1:03} seraphim we have cherubim the hierarchies of heaven whose sitting on the right hand of God, whose sitting on the left hand of God. We have many artist depictions of that and in literature. How do they know?

Comment: and there are also people who physically there and they came back and they have another story to tell. They are over the whole scene and they see themselves, the body laying on the floor for example, after a motorcycle accident, then they see what is going in. And after they can tell what the doctor was doing and they reincarnate again and say it was a wonderful place I didn't want to come back but now I'm back I want to change my life completely.

James: Historically Tantra in the Hindu tradition and the Buddhist tradition in India was very much linked with magic and alchemy. There is a Hindu science called rasayana which uses chemical medicines such as mercury {2:58} to lengthen one's lifespan. Likewise in European alchemical practices. Tibetan tradition also has such practices aimed at developing an immortal body. The same in Chinese tai chi and chi gung practices. The idea is that the forces of death can be stopped. This can be seen as located in the dharmakaya, for example, since the dharmakaya never changes; it is vajra. Or you can develop a notion that you can have a vajra body an indestructible body that lasts a long time. Now, just as in the outer world if you are a lion and you get to eat a deer, if you are a deer you don't eat a lion - that is to say there is a hierarchy of aggression. Human beings are also very concerned with hierarchies of power. So in the realm of yogic activity there was a great deal of competition just as amount the philosophical schools of Buddhism they have philosophical competitions where they debate issues and you can win money and prestige and become the court philosopher and so on. You can also become the court alchemist, you could become a yogi, the one who had magical powers. There are stories of great yogis with enormous powers and the miracles they could do. Some could fly in the sky, some could eat rocks, some could travel into the centre of the earth, some could restore corpses, there are many, many, magical deeds that were performed by these people.

Now, whether you believe these as true or not that's your choice, there is clearly no way of proving nowadays that they are true. However in Tibet being a powerful yogi was very important. For example, the very basic ones are being able to stop rain, start rain, stop hail stones to protect the crops and it was required that people should do that. Some of you may know this brief biography of Machig Labdron that's on the website and in it, it describes how in this monastery near where she was living every year they had an annual festival where the villagers would milk their cattle and prepare a huge amount of yoghurt which they would then take the monastery as a sign of purification. It was a kind of big interaction between then monastery and the loach people. But that year there was a drought and so no rain was falling no grass was growing, not much milk from the cows, not much yoghurt - "oh what should we do? This is terrible." The abbot of the monastery says, "Ah, my monks will pray and do a rain ritual and that will bring about the rain." And they do this ritual and no rain falls. Up on the mountain in a cave naked, dancing, is our heroine Machig Labdron by her blessing power rain falls from the sky the tits of the cows get big the milk comes in the pot the yoghurt goes to the monastery, ha ha boo hoo - nobody knows that she did it. The abbot says "I did it" someone says "no there is a mad yogini up on the mountain who did it." And then the story goes on. It was because she was able to do this that she becomes special. So let me put it this way - if you are a social outsider in Tibet the way you get to be on the inside is by being special. Anthropologically it was the same in India. Many of the great early mahasiddhas came from outsider classes like the *dombhipa* caste and included blacksmiths, cobblers, people who washed clothes and so on. If you wash people's clothes you are washing out shit, menstrual blood, and so on, and the Hindu notion is that since this is very contaminating the people who do it have a very low status. Theses are real outsiders - but one day they are flying in the sky. The bottom will be at the top as said in the Bible - *the first shall be last, the last shall be first*. So you have a reversal of the social order so magical power puts the outsider at the centre. And this is a social exchange structure which continues in the Tibetan idea, so for example we have the story of Milarepa. This is a time when Buddhism had gone quite weak according to the traditional Buddhist account {8:24} after the time of Padmasambhava and the first expansion of Buddhism through the kingdom there was a fight from the opponents of the traditional deities, the local gods and so on. Sort of what we call Bonpo nowadays and this led to various conflicts and the Royal structure collapsed and so the kingdoms came a bit chaotic for about two hundred years. At the end of which you had the second development of Buddhism in Tibet led by people like Atisha and a whole new wave of translations with Rinchen Zangpo and so on, and Milarepa is riding on the crest of that. Of course his teacher Marpa had been part of that translates group in the eleventh century.

So Buddhism is not very established but the Bonpo tradition is strong. Milarepa is doing retreat near Mount Kailash and he gets into conflict with a local Bonpo person and they have a competition using their drums, because the Bonpo have very big drums, who using their drums can fly to the top of mount Kailash. Milarepa gets there first - hip hip hooray - Buddhism wins down with the Bonpo. You have story like that of the Catholic saints and the Christian saints when they come to island and they fight with the local shamans and they show them that they are foolish and from that day on everybody becomes Catholic and says "hello father how are you?" So from an anthropological point of view these are social exchange stories that you find in most cultures.

However we are not here to study anthropology with the eyes of faith we humbly believe that the great ones will help us. This is a choice. Why is faith important? When we take our two hands and put them in front of our heart we make a circle of energy, we seal ourselves in which means we are avoiding distraction. Faith is very important. Faith brings all the energy which is dispersed through the small channels in the body, brings it back into the heart, when you are really praying from your heart you feel that. Everything, your muscles in the gut tighten up, come right in, tears come from the eyes, 'you must save me'. In that moment you're not interested in anything else, all the energy goes into the heart and the heart goes into the central channel there is no thought. Then you can recognise your own nature. So these are supportive stories to give us faith, that's what they are for. They are not things really to be invested in a western historical cultural perspective.

There's this story some of you know it, about a scholar in America who runs - a very good translator and he runs a department in California and he invited the Dalai Lama to come and meet his students. And they had all been doing research in Mahayana philosophy and Madhyamika and so on. And he came and some of the students presented some of their learning which was showing the historical evolution and how Mahayana ideas had developed out of the earlier Theravada structure. And the Dalai Lama apparently said, "it's very wonderful what your students have learned. And clearly they are showing how in history the mind develops according to what was there before. But, I am the Dalai Lama of Tibet. The Mahayana teachings were taught by Shakyamuni Buddha in Rajgir in Bihar - end of story." So there you have two paradigms one is a western analytical historical analysis that is showing how these things evolved and the other is, I believe this was taught by the Buddha.

So whenever you approach these things you have to see who is the one who is approaching it? Is it 'I' the intellectual with my highly developed brain, that can cut like a knife to the real truth of the situation - 'I win'. Or is it poor little me who is moving towards death and is very frightened, 'I'll believe whatever you want to tell me.' That's the main choice. I remember when I was first studying with my teacher he said, "I never teach logic because logic is too dangerous. Logic is like a two edge sword, my you cut out into the ignorance of the world and then you cut your own head off." Because you become so sharp and there are many stories of the over intellectualising approach of certain Tibetan traditions which makes people very aggressive very cantankerous always wanting to win.

So the key thing is what is our purpose? If the key thing is to recognise ourselves and in through many, many generations in the past people have used these as a method, the values of a method is whether it works not necessarily whether it's true. There's a lot of reader has that shows that a placebo is very positive outcome for healing. In Britain at the moment the status of doctors is going down and down and down, due to quite aggressive governmental attack. No doubt some doctors are delinquent but what it does do fundamentally is destroy the cheapest medicine available - which is faith. If you don't trust your doctor you've got a real problem, 'I'm going to go on the Internet and I'm going to look at all the diagnosis and find all the side effects of all the drugs, then go into the doctors I'm going to tell them this is what you need to give me.' And more and more people do that, the doctor says, 'the transaction works because I am the

one who can help you - you have the problem. But if you are going to tell me what you need than what am I a shop?" So the placebo is very important and faith is very important.

Dzogchen on death

So this is an explanatory structure -none of us can know whether it is true or not but if your preparing for death and you start to find your energy ebbing away, it is quite likely that you might be afraid because you are not becoming who you are. Some of you have been a bit sick sometimes in your life, never if you get a bad cold and you don't feel too well, you say, "O poor me - this is not nice." Now imagine everything is going, everything is vanishing away - nothing. It's quite frightening. All the things that you cling to, say you have a really shit day at work, you come home and put the key in the door and think "Ah" and close the door, put on the kettle and make a cup of tea. "Fuck off everyone I'm ok. I have my safe place." This is also our safe place - when you're dying you lose your house, you lose your car, you lose your bank account, you lose your jewellery, you lose your lover, you lose everything. You lose your body, you don't see any more, you don't hear anymore, you don't taste, you don't touch - it's nothing. We are used to having something, we are used to being something. Not having anything is not very nice - how do I take care of myself? I reassure myself. Some of you will know the prayer written by Ridgzin Godem in which he says - recognising that everything is illusory, it's impermanent, renounce the world. I give up everything, but then I find myself becoming completely coughs up in my bowl, the bowl I eat my food out of the everyday objects of my daily use becoming incredibly important. And if any of you have done long retreats you find that that is the case, this insignificant thing becomes very important. We are used to grasping our dualistic structure means the subject needs an object to hold onto. The process of death is that all the objects of the ego mind is grasping is falling away.

So the dzogchen view of death is while you are alive, recognise the nature of grasping, rest in the natural state so that as everything is going you let it go because you have got used to the self-liberation of all phenomena which is the experience from the side of awareness. If you are on the other side as it were, if you are in the side of ego you are familiar with hanging on because hanging on is how we keep our life going isn't it? We want to hang into our health, "O I'm getting old I better take some vitamin supplements to hang onto the health that I have. I don't want to lose any more of my senses. I'm holding myself together. {03:36}. So at a certain point this holding relaxes, you don't want it to relax but it's going, it's going, you're dying. For the mind to separate from the body is quite a slow process, if factors are good and you're not in violent situation. But if your able to die in your own bed particularly not a hospital bed, if you don't have drips going into you, if you don't have huge amount of medication, if you're not in great pain, if you have people around you who are considerate and thoughtful - this is now down to .001 per cent of the population, if you are able to die in that way, then you experience this very subtle separating out of consciousness from the body. Nowadays we have a sense that the bowel is quite intelligent, there are a lot of nerve endings in the bowel which is sending messages all through the body - that the body has an intelligence. From the Tibetan point of view this is because from the main central channel in the body branch channels come out

primarily at the heart chakra but also at the other chakras and the through them also energy which is also if you like intelligence spreads out through the body. And located through these parts of the channels are things like memory, performance and so on. It's not all stored on one central place.

So it takes quite a while for this to come into the central channel and then to completely dissolve. The person can go as it were unconscious, can appear not to be there but still bits of them are catching up. And it's when the mind is completely all dissolved in space that the full free movement out of the body occurs. And it's just space and in this space which is called the *chönyid bardo* - the bardo {05:41} of actuality the transitional space in which the natural state is open and accessible. It's accessible because the optimal amount of none disturbance of awareness is present. That is to say all the vibrations or all the sub aspects of our various consciousness's have all become quiescent. So that if you die in a sudden way then your still kind of in a very active mode and it's very difficult then for you to collect yourself and move out into space. And so you jump over space. For example in the Tibetan tradition they talk of the period of the bardo being forty-nine days - the experience of the death experience being forty nine days. C R Lama said, " forty nine days for very high yogi's. For ordinary people maximum of three days, maybe half an hour." Because these experiences are happening and the person has no mental stability - so when we sit in meditation and we are carried off by thought, by thought, by thought, what's going to happen when you die? You are not going to be hanging around very long. Under these very supportive conditions, sitting here on the meditation cushion, having had food and drink, feeling safe in the knowledge that lunch will be coming soon, if in these circumstances you can't relax why do you think you are going to relax in the agitation of death?

So the coming together which is created by not hanging on which is allowed because you realise the answer to my lack is not a substance. Like we used to have a sticker here - ' the answer doesn't lie in the object'. When I feel a lack I think something will give me that so if I feel a bit hungry I will have lunch, there is an emptiness a hollowness in my stomach and I eat the food and the food comes into me and it fills up the lack. This is our normal experience in duality, we need something to fill the absence. The point of view of dzogchen, it says very, very clearly the only thing which can fill the lack is the infinity of the space of your own mind. [08:51} No thought, no sensation, no emotion, no person, no possession can fill that gap, only space itself which is infinity can fill the gap. Because the gap is very big, the gap for the longing for infinity. So infinity will fill infinities gap perfectly but something is too small, which is why we are always busy, that's engine the dynamic that drives samsara.

So dzogchen point of view of death is every time we practice we relax and open in allowing thoughts to come and go we are practicing none disturbance none agitation, quiescence peace in that open state we are already working in the level of the bardo of actuality. So we know when everything stops I'm still here. Awareness is the fundamental base which is unchanging and undestroyed everything else can vanish but / will not be annihilated but who is this I? Not the personality not the memories, not the consciousness, not the speaker of German or English or whatever, but awareness itself. So this is why the practice that we do is so vital in terms of this system. That only by recognising that is to say becoming your own natural awareness do

you have the key to let you rest in non-disturbance. All the other things that we do are movements of energy. If you're doing tantric visualisation, if you're coming prayers, if you're doing prostrations, these are all activities of energy. If you're doing the semzin if you're doing many kinds of *longde* exercises, holding the body, pressure points, if you're doing yantra yoga, these are explorations of the patterning of energy. They are grounded in the idea that if you simplify patterning of energy it will relax more quickly. That is to say because your energy is very convoluted like that, mounting a straight stick down it is very difficult, if you straighten out the pipe then stick will go down the pipe.

So if you want to relax in an easy way and your very contorted inside yourself with many conflicting thoughts and emotions and habits then working with energy is good for releasing that and if your young and healthy something like *thrulkhor* or *yantra yoga* is very helpful. It's not essential because from the very beginning the natural state is freely available. You don't have to have simplified energy to recognise your own nature. Because you also need to have good karma, you also need to have faith; you need to have many things. So there are in the dzogchen tradition there are many stories of people who are very old when they came to the teaching, you may have seen this famous drawing of a guy kind of holding a long horn holding it head up. Well he was so old his head kept falling over. But because he had a lot of faith he was able to recognise it. Faith is vital.

So when you fall asleep at night you have a similar kind of experience, you start to feel a bit tired. What does tired mean? You get a bit drowsy you're not so clear, the wants to lie down, not to get up, long slow breath. Somebody says "hey shall we go out?" "I'm tired, go away I'm letting go of things." So when you fall asleep the earth element goes into the water element, the fire element, the wind element - James makes a snoring sound - gone. "Wake up wake up." "ah, ah, ah" Because the rough aspect of the space is stupidity. So when somebody's unconscious they're not very bright. Some people are good in the morning, some people are not very good.

So every night when you fall asleep you are practicing death and when you wake up in the morning and especially if you're not in prisoned by an alarm clock, because an alarm clock is a very artificial means of waking up, if particularly you are in holiday and you can wake up slowly and gently, then you have exactly that. Out of the space comes the wind, a little bit of movement, a bit more energy - you start to move a little bit and then the body becomes stronger. Otherwise if you wake up and you're very tired and you try to get out of bed, it's difficult to stand up because the elements are not integrated. So every day we have the perfect opportunity to prepare for death. Letting go {14:56} into nothing, out of nothing into something, something into nothing, nothing into something. This is the pulsation that is going on all the time, and this is what we do in the practice isn't it? We begin we sit, we breath out, were letting go all of the things that preoccupy us and it's just open. And then especially if your practicing at home and you don't have somebody saying, "ok now we stop doing this." In your own time you find yourself coming back into the world. And then in that way you start to integrate the state of openness and the state of engagement what is called *nyamzhak* and *jetok*. *Nyamzhak* means staying even, being equal even and open to everything and *jetok* means what you get afterwards. It means when you stop sitting meditation and you move into activity, in

dzogchen you want the two to be the same. This is what Longchenpa was famous for, for him meditating or not meditating is completely the same, so this is kind of the highest goal. But usually when we come out of the meditation we get hooked into our concepts and thoughts again which is again why these five questions are very important, especially - where does the mind stay? And what size is the kind? Because if you see directly that your awareness is infinite that is to say, it has no limit, where else could something come from? This is absolutely fundamental. If there is a land that it is so big that it reaches to the end of the universe all living beings must be living in that land, coz there ain't nowhere else for them to be living. That's obvious. The mind is infinite everything that occurs is in the mind. The ego is not infinite, the ego is finite, when we identify ourselves as this personal individual existence we are limited, our world is limited our concerns are limited and we're going to die and many tears will come.

So this is a choice point. At all times in all situations, rigpa is the thing - that's at the heart of the teaching and you can read many different books on this, mother all say exactly the same. This is the one key that opens every door, this is the one meditation that you need. If you read in the Simply Being book, then end of this text it says, some people call it dzogchen, some people call it Mahamudra, some people call it Prajnaparamita, it goes by many different names but it's the only thing you need, you don't need anything more than this. Because the essence of all tantric practice is in it, the essence of all ethical practices are in it simply because everything's in it. There ain't nothing outside the mind - nothing.

So this is the main approach to the experience of death to again and again, relax into openness and integrate whatever is occurring as the energy of the ground. So that rather than being an individual experiencing many different things you experience the arising of the richness, the diversity of the display of the energy of the dharmakaya. In this way you have, what in dzogchen it is called *the integration of primordial purity - khadag* and spontaneous display of *lungrup* and this represents trekcho and thogal. That is to say, the mind is pure and empty there is nothing defining there is no substance inside this at all and within this mind everything arises effortlessly by itself. The two of these together is the ground and the path and result of dzogchen. And within that all that we need to know is available.

Nature

So again we've covered quite a lot of territory and after lunch you have some free time so if you like you can go outside and do some practice in the open air that's also very pleasant and you just observe the cycles of nature, what is nature dying? What is nature coming up? You can still see some of the trees are in the state of winter everything is held down inside the root the energy has gone into the ground. And in others it's already waking up and it's coming out above. This is like going to sleep at night and waking in the morning, this is like death and moving into rebirth. So one of the things that has happened I think for us human beings is we have increasingly displaced ourselves from nature we have taken nature as the enemy and we imagine that we have an existence apart from it. But the cycles of nature are the cycles of our life too and death is not something to be afraid of its part of the cycle of our existence. Coming into

existence going out of existence this happens every day it happens every moment. A thought arises in your mind that this is your existence then it vanishes and then something else, and then something else, something else. The basis of the continuity is the emptiness of the mind. The basis of the continuity of experience is the mind's own quality of generosity. We can see this everywhere around us. We see it in ourselves - and life's not so bad.

Guru Yoga

These teachings we have been looking at they don't just fall out of the sky they come from a lineage and lineage is very, very important in Tibetan Buddhism. The basic outline of what I have been saying has come to me from Chimed Ridgzin Lama and he got it from Tulku Tsorlo who got it from Gonpo Wangyal who got it from Nuden Dorje. This is a very short lineage it's a terma lineage. So in the nyingmapa idea this is they say it's still warm with the breath of the dakinis who look over it and protect it and what is expressed is very simple and straightforward.

Lineage is important because it always links us out, that is to say, we are aware that our life is dependent on the lives of other people. Also although the task is to recognise our own nature the path to recognising our own nature lies through our relationship with other people. This is because the barrier to recognising who we are is duality, that is to say, separating ourselves from other people. The resolution of this is through the creative fusion which leads to a resolution. For example when a thought arises in your mind if you fuse with that thought it takes you into a sense of something substantial, which leaves a hunger for something more substantial. If you fuse with a particular idea in the world and you try to open it up by engaging with a opposite idea you might get a dialectical progression. So a position is set up and a counter position an antithesis is set up and the dynamic between them creates something new some kind of synthesis. This is an ordinary way of progressing. But in the higher Tantra and in dzogchen we are concerned with fusion with the object that returns us to ourselves. That is to say, by joining one to nothing, one becomes nothing and in becoming nothing realises nothing and infinity are the same and everything is included. In Tantra we do this dissolving practices, in dzogchen we do it through guru yoga.

Guru here means the site of that which is already ok. In the world if we can find something which is good and come into relationship with it then we improve our chances but when we get something good what do we do with it - we have to hold onto it. So if you get a nice new car and park it in the part of London that I live in, it's very likely that someone will take their keys and run it along the car because the fact that you have a nice thing is an insult to them because they don't have a nice thing. So now they very kindly bring you back onto their level of evolution. That's a problem with nice things that are added on. The structure of our ordinary self the ego is like Lego, we like to take out the bad bits and stick in the good bits. But when we do the guru yoga practice, the good we imagine either in a visualised form like Padmasambhava or Kuntuzangpo or a more simple form like a white letter Aa surrounded by rainbow light - this is the presence of the actuality of our nature as the other. That is to say, the other is yourself. This is a kind of contradiction, how can someone else be me? By looking at the other you see

yourself, by looking at yourself you alienate yourself from yourself. {05:24} this is a very peculiar thing. The more you think about who you are the more you'll never find out who you are. But if you open to the emptiness of the ground nature of who you are, you'll find yourself very quickly.

So the white letter Aa represents emptiness, that is to say nothing at all, open space. This is the dharmadhatu the basis of our awareness. It's surrounded by rainbow light because this emptiness is not a null void, it's a plenum void, it's a void with which keeps filling itself. It radiates the light of experience. So just in this simple form of the rainbow ticle surrounding the white letter Aa we have nothing which is everything. Now we are something, being something has some freedoms but also many disadvantages. Something is going to die - and when we become something we fear that we will be nothing, nothing at all. But if some thing which is nothing can go into something which is everything then this is a much better investment. So we willingly invest our something in nothing. What do we get back? Everything. This is a very good investment, but if you keep investing in something and trying to add bits to it just creates a tower that gets higher and higher with a very narrow base and eventually it falls over.

So the essence of the practice is very simple. In the sky in front of us, in the space in front of us we imagine a white letter Aa surrounded by rainbow light - you can also imagine a white letter Aa in your own heart, because in our heart is also emptiness. Between the sky in the middle of your heart and the sky in front of you there is no difference at all. Emptiness is meeting emptiness. Then we make the sound of Aa we do this three times very slowly and our energy relaxes into the space with which it is always moving. It's not that we're having dissolve something into nothing but when we say Aa we remember that something is always nothing. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. In this this state of nothing there is immediately freedom all the limiting thoughts, all the worries, fears and concerns that we have are just hovering in the air like rainbow light and we open the space of the heart to the space in front of us. This Aa represents the heart if all the Buddhas, Kuntuzangpo, down through the whole lineage to Vajrasattva to Garab Dorje, Shri Singha, Padmasambhava, from Padmasambhava in the short lineage to Nuden Dorje, to Gonpo Wangyal to Tulku Tsorlo then to Chimed Ridgzin. In that way we are connected to the primordial source. The very shortest lineage is from Aa to Aa - there has never been any separation in the emptiness of the heart and the emptiness of space. The buddha's mind and our mind are not two different things.

So we can pour ourselves into the Aa and the Aa can come into us. The key point is the fusion, when these two spaces meet there is no excess and there is no lack. There is a complete integration nothing is missing. So this is the fulfilment of the union of subject and object, not as complementary opposites as you would have in the symbolism of Tantra where you have a male and female deity representing wisdom and compassion coming together as complementary parts making a complete whole - a unification. Here the merging is into space. So making the sound of Aa we enter the space into nothing. Of course there is still light and colour and we still hear coughing and moving maybe cars outside and so on. Sounds are arising, the movement of the mind tells us what theses sounds are. In this space we see the movement of the mind is moving in space. Everything is moving in space, shapes, colours, smells taste. There is no

substance no essence to any of these phenomena. So we rest in this open space where we are not different from Kuntuzangpo himself. This is very easy - why is it easy? Because we're very lucky, were very very lucky. To meet the dzogchen teachings is something very unique in the world, it's not available everywhere, they don't sell it in the supermarket, they don't teach it in the schools, they don't teach it in the government. The World Bank has none of it in its reserves, the World Health Organisation does not have it available in injectable capsules - it's very rare. To think that the basis of our existence is somethings very relaxed and open which can accommodate all the movement of experience which means that self-defensiveness dissolves into the capacity to be present with or co emergent with whatever substances are arising. One is neither dominated and controlled by events nor dominating and controlling events. There is the ever present evolution of existence, or rather evolving if existence.

So, we are never alone, whenever you get trapped in sadness in difficulty, in feeling unloved, in feeling rejected, in feeling a failure, in feeling you haven't achieved what you want to do in life, in being trapped in anxieties about death, anxieties about being sick and so on, these are states of feeling cut off, that is to say the sense of ones own personal identity which is existing as a concept starts to wrap more and more concepts around it and these spiral out until like Sleeping Beauty trapped in a thicket of brambles, we can't find a way out. We are both asleep and hidden by the creativity of this monstrous elaboration. In that state it's not a good idea to struggle. If you are in the middle of a thicket of brambles or roses and you try to struggle you will get ripped to pieces.

Likewise with concepts. It's impossible to think your way out of samsara. Trying to use thoughts to deconstruct thoughts is an endless journey and we become anxious and over-intense. The idea of trying to use the mind to create freedom just creates new kinds of prisons.

Here, without struggling to use reliance on the intellect, on conceptual elaboration, on received cultural information, we simply open into the space of the presence of all the sentient beings.

Merge into that state, fuse into the state, then the white letter Aa dissolves into space so now there's only space, space here, space there, everywhere space. Instead of us having space as if it were a possession or a quality, everything with which we are and everything with which we experience is the radiance of space itself. Then sit in that state and just be present with the movement of existence.

Remarks on Guru Yoga

So this is a practice that you find in all the different lineages of dzogchen and you'll find it in the tantric lineages as well. In its outer form in the lower tantras you imagine the guru seated on a throne surrounded by rainbow light and every splendid and we pray like a child to a mother, saying *I'm lost I need you please help me*. And you can put a lot of emotion into that and then you go into the fusion or you can start in a more even way going into the fusion. So you can explore for yourself the kind of emotion that's useful. CR Lama being a kind of sturdy person

always said we are not praying with a request, but with a demand. We are saying, "Padmasambhava you said you will help me so do it now." He said that is the basis for prayer. {01:16} But that was maybe his particular relationship to Padmasambhava. And it's important to see that there are these many different pathways because some of the time in the traditional rituals we chant in a very soft, sweet delicate way and sometimes in a very strong way. This means whatever mood you have is also a pathway, you don't have to stop being upset or disappointed, all of that is also valid as it is. Because we are dealing energy of manifestation there is no doubt that the door is open. The question is whether we are ready to go through the door, but the door is always there. So that is why guru yoga is very important, it's praised in all the different lineages. It doesn't mean that you are being subservient or being opted into some kind of sect. The guru represents both the extreme form of duality in the difference and also the ending of duality in the non-dual fusion. So it's the place where the relation between subject and object can be transformed.

Phowa

So now we look a little bit at phowa. Phowa means to move or to transfer something and it's a Tibetan yoga practice, it comes in the Six Yoga's of Naropa and some other lineages as well and it's a practice to transfer your consciousness out of your body into another state. There was an associated practice called *dondrup* to put your mind, your consciousness into someone else's body, but that was found not be a very healthy thing to do. The stories that you read about it are mainly unhappy stories. So this story for example of Marpa's son who put his consciousness into a bird and a hunter killed the bird, and so Marpa lost his son and he was very unhappy. But phowa is different because here we put the mind into the pure land for example Dewachen or Zangdopalri. In the traditional form, which maybe we can do one year but they are quite ritualistic and generally we have not been doing ritual activity, it involves quite a lot of chanting, a little bit of yoga breath control - you put your mind into the heart of Amitabha. But there is a much softer way in which we simply visualise, there are many different variations, I'll show you some of them, visualise in front of you the pure palace of Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava is the great yogi who brought tantric Buddhism and many of the teachings of dzogchen into Tibet. There's an image of him on the wall here which some of you can see and there are some other images around - over there, there are some statues of him. After he was in Tibet, he left Tibet and went to the island of Chamaradvipa where he entered into the body of the King of the demons and has been living there ever since gradually transforming the culture of that country. So he's seen as a great magician, hero, enlightened master. So Zangdopalri is the, on the earth level Buddha realm where those who follow in the Nyingmapa lineages imagine is a good place to be reborn. It's much easier to do practice there than here. {03:02}.

So we imagine arising out of the sea a great copper-coloured mountain, a bit like a volcanic mountain with some roads going up it, many trees, bushes. We see many paths going up and on the top of it there is a very beautiful palace shaped in a typical way of a mandala house. There are three levels to it a bit like the temple of Samye. On the ground floor sitting in the middle is Padmasambhava with his eight manifestations and so on. Some of you are familiar with this

visualisation, anyway it's just a nice house with a nice person in it, and if you arrive there they won't slam the door in your face. His nature is emptiness of everything is bright, beautiful, shining and transparent like a crystal palace. The different sides of the palace are made of different jewels to reflect the colours of the five wisdoms. When we sit we simply imagine rising from our heart a road made of rainbow colours, just moving through the sky into the heart of Padmasambhava. And then again and again we imagine we are moving down that road and that we are merging into his heart. Keep doing that until your sense of being in this body dissolves and you feel yourself in that space over there. Sometimes this is done with prayers with mantras but you can do it in its most simple form just evacuating yourself - removing yourself from this place and moving into that.

We can try that for a while. Just imagine a beautiful palace arising as the shimmering form of emptiness there is Padmasambhava who has within him the qualities of the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya shining and radiant and we on our side ready to go. Why are we here? What are we waiting for? Nothing - better there than here, that's the very basis of phowa - better there than here. Here and there are the same, they are the sites within the dharmadhatu, so if you go from here to there you don't really go anywhere else but in the level of our ego, when we feel trapped when we feel lonely, when we feel small, then to go from here to there is very good. And it's very important to learn a range of practices so that according to your mood you can do something, because just going Aa, is very open but it's very adult and sometimes we are very small and very frightened, we don't know what to do - so we say, "papa look after me please" then you go - very nice.

So we sit and try this. As you do this practice when you have the sense of having arrived in this safe and joyous place in the centre of Padmasambhava's heart you can make the sound of *phat!* to cut off this old flesh body and leave it behind. So there is nothing to return to, the rainbow which collapses there you are forever safe in the heart of Padmasambhava. So you visualise moving along the bridge merging in the heart and make the sound of *phat!* And you can keep doing that again and again until you are sure that there is where you reside.

Illusion and impact

Is to free ourselves again and again from the notion of having a substantial flesh and blood body that separates us from what is going on around us. In the dzogchen tradition they talk about the phowa chenpo - the great phowa - which is to transfer the entirety of one's body into the realm of light. This is not a magical alchemical process it's what we have already been considering today. For example when you do the {00:49} - in front of you is the letter Aa, your own nature is grounded in this letter Aa in your heart, space moves into space with the recitation of the three Aa's all the formal constituents of the gross body of samsara, the five skandhas, the eight consciousness's, the six sense organs, the object of the six sense organs and the six sense consciousness's, all the various components of our existence are dissolved into sound and light - and dissolve. Then we are in a state of openness. This openness itself is the great transferring because now we are in space, and working with these questions we looked at this morning,

when you really see that space is what there is and everything that is occurring is the radiance of that space then everything which is occurring is already in space. So it's not that you have to go from one place to another, we are always already in space and therefore if you are experiencing body dying, this body that is dying is itself the radiance of the space. When you get caught up in the thoughts, 'I am dying I don't want to die, this is terrible' many, many thoughts arise, what are these thoughts? They are just the radiance of emptiness. For example if you look at Mipham Rinpoche's commentary on the Seven-line Prayer, he describes various levels of interpretation of this. And in the third level of interpretation he saying when we say 'Oh Padmasambhava {03:07 - recites part of prayer in Tibetan} around you there are many dakinis flying, these are all the thoughts and feelings and sensations that arise. So our being is the enlightened presence, these thoughts and feelings are not causing any trouble, they are just the movement of energy in space. Like beautiful dakinis dancing in the sky, playing drums, waving sashes and banners. Some of these dakinis look very sweet, very beautiful, some look very dangerous with lion heads and foxes heads and so on. They come in many different forms, just as we have good thoughts and bad thoughts, but really they are quite playful.

So in dzogchen we have exactly the same idea except there is no symbolic interpretation or association to it, it's simply whatever thought is arising is the radiance of the mind itself. So, the central instruction is not to enter into judgement, not to stand where you are and make commentaries on what is going on because that will reify, solidify, objectify the experience. So if you have a thought that is sad, or lonely, or depressed or frightened, first of all the feeling tone of it is not very nice, then you think I don't want to have this kind of thought. Now you have three things, you have the original thought with its feeling tone, you've got your reaction to it and you've got all the rising sense that you have to do something about it - "this is not good". In that moment all that is required is to recognize what the thought is, something arising and passing. Where is it arising? In your mind. This is an experience. The experience say's I am true, that doesn't make it true. When you sit with children and you watch cartoons on the television, along comes Micky Mouse, we all know who Micky Mouse, now we are looking at Micky Mouse, Micky Mouse is Micky Mouse. It would be foolish to think that Micky Mouse is Donald Duck that would be sign that you are not educated. So when you look at Micky Mouse the Micky Mouse ness of Micky Mouse is immediately there. Is there really a Micky Mouse? We believe in Micky Mouse because we give ourselves to Micky Mouse, mother if you that Micky Mouse gives himself to you. That's very beautiful. So as we have looked before that is what Aristotle describes - the spending of disbelief, when you go to the theatre pretending to be someone else. You don't shout at them and say, "go home - get a fucking job". We say, "O, oh, oh". We pour ourselves, fuse ourselves into the drama enacted by the actor. When you do that, what the actors show themselves as being is true for you but it's only true for you if you can believe in it. So if you have young children and you watch some movies on the television, it's always delightful as they are completely - "Ah, ah wow" so real it's so true. We know it's just a story but for them it's real.

Comment - but it's difficult when I get a tax bill and the government believe in the tax and I don't believe in it. I have to deal with the result and then another bill. It's important the thoughts when they arise - I can see that everything is empty but that's not my daily life so.....

James: It is very difficult because the key point is we have to become space before hand - we have to become like the mirror. So it's not that there is like in one of these movies you know, there is the hero and heroine are running from the fire and come to a chasm and there's an old log going across this deep chasm and they have to walk over it to get to the other side and death is on both sides. It's not a middle way like that. The mind is space and within this space everything is arising. So it's not that we have to find the middle point because the ego can't do that. The middle point is the space within which these are arising. So it's like if you're in the park and you see some family having trouble and the kids are running away and shouting at the parents and the parents are running after them. Nice - like a real holiday, not my family. So in that way when you have dis identification it's just stuff. When you identify then it's - this is what Buddhist grasping means. When we pour ourselves into an illusory character like something in the television, it becomes real. It's made real by our gift of our libido, our prana, our chi, our life energy of all the thoughts and feelings go with that. If we hold that at bay it's just images moving. Now if you leave it just as images you don't have much of a life, then you have to live in a cave because you can't survive in the world.

So the meditation and non-meditation is to take the quality of neutrality of openness of light, into the world where things really do matter, and we do need to pay our bills and we do need to talk sternly to kids some of the time and we do need to be sweet to colleagues at work we don't like and so on. So that all involves moving and repositioning ourselves in a manner of a dream. It's illusion but it's not nothing at all. It's not strongly real, not nothing at all but like a reflection of the moon on water it's there, my boss can tell me to do things I don't want to do, because of my boss. Hierarchical institution, I may not like to have a boss but they are there, but if I want to have a job I've got to have a boss. I'm not allowed to select the boss I want. So it's like that, but that's an illusory structure. So it's really important that we get a sense of what an illusion is. It means there is no essence to it, mother is no inherent self-nature in it, it's not strongly real but it's manifesting. It's appearance and emptiness, sound and emptiness, clarity and emptiness. We can just blow it away because it's not real, must not real in the sense of having a substance but it's impactful because it's an energetic patterning..

Maybe time for a cup of tea. We take a break for fifteen minutes and we're back at five past.

Preparing for death

To look a little bit more at death itself. One of the familiar representations of death is the skeleton with a scythe, grim reaper, somebody cutting down life the way a farmer cuts down the crops in the field. So this has the idea that death is an attacker, death comes from the outside and steals something from us. We also have the sense sometimes that it's something inside us waiting to come out - we are born with death inside us. It's quite a common modern idea that because we are born we are going to die and so our death is already operating inside. From the point of view of dzogchen, death is neither inside nor outside because the ground of our being, the awareness has no outside or inside to it. Death and life are both patterns of experience. The experiencer as we have looked before has these two aspects, one is, the self-referential ego

matrix and the other is the open site of awareness. Both happening simultaneously, but because of our habits and prejudices we are more attentive to the patterning of our ego interpretation. {01:44} So, from the point of view of dzogchen it's not that you have to do anything special to prepare for death, preparing for life is preparing for death, because they have the same nature they are experiences which arise and pass. Death doesn't end life itself, because life is experience and death is another kind of experience. And if you read the bardo teachings that's very much what they are saying. Some time we can look more at these, in the past we've looked at the prayer of the six bardos in some detail, so you can get recordings on that if you want to listen.

So rather than thinking, 'oh I need to do something to make the bardo easier or better by this practice of opening to the ground of our own being doing this again and again, maintaining this under all circumstances - by being open to life your open to death. Any time we get sick we get a back ache we get injury, any time we become happy or sad, any of these fluctuations in the field of experience are reminders that when we ground ourselves in our assumptions our predictions of stability, of predictability, we're getting lost. The vulnerability of the ego state is embedded in the ego's capacity to communicate. For example, (James knocks on a glass) " I've knocked on your door five times and you don't reply are you sleeping? hello? " the glass bottle has a very limited capacity to communicate. (Laughter) luckily, we are not made out of glass. The ego is communicative system, communication means speaking hole, hearing holes, smelling holes - yeah? This is very important going out coming in. It means it's not fixed it's not stable. The ego's function is to be an interaction to be moved and to be moving other things as well. Therefore it is unstable the health of the ego it's instability. When people get major psychiatric conditions and become very fixed in their behaviour maybe have a kind of schizophrenia and become almost catatonic this is really not a nice place to be. Because the bodies not really moving there is nothing going on. This is a person becoming like a piece of wood or somebody who becomes elective mute and decides not to speak, not to really communicate in any way - this is a tragedy. The fact that we suffer, the fact that our moods are changing that we are labile is part of our life because the ego is energy and energy doesn't have a box around it to keep it safe. We have this lovely skin on the outside, which feels sensations, sensations of pleasure, sensations of pain. It is the sensitivity of the ego that means it's not a fixed and permanent feature. It's obvious we are going to die, this is a temporary construction and we see the signs of our aging when we look in the mirror, we lose some of the hair, we get wrinkles round the eyes and so on. This is because we have lived a life, we are very lucky to have lived a life. Some people die very young and don't have any life to live. Life marks us - this is good. Imagine if you had no mark on you, what would that mean?

So the ego again and again looking from different directions {07:02} can see that our sense of self is not an entity, it's not a thing, it doesn't exist in itself of itself. It exists in ceaseless communication it is in fact communication. It's not that the world sends a message to us which we then process and send a message back it's much more if you imagine an infinity loop where energy is communicating across and when the energy come into one polarity it turns and goes back in this elliptical movement of an enantiodromia. Just looping and turning, and looping and turning and looping and turning - there is no substance in the poles, there is nothing there. It's

just extension return, extension return, extension return. Somebody speaks to us and we respond, speaking and responding, then it turns over now we are speaking and they are responding. Leading and following, leading and following. In this way we have no need to construct a solid fixed enduring ego identity, it's the very fixity of the self-definition which gets in the way of being able to respond. Because the stronger our self-definition the more difficult it is to allow ourselves to make different moves.

Being with the dying

So if you're going to be with people who are dying there is often the question - what can I do for them? What will help them? There's no general solution to that because it depends on what the person believes in. If somebody is dying and you start reading *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* to them and they are Christian, it's not very helpful. And if you're reading *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and they are not used to that kind of practice also it's not very useful, because reading it when someone's dying is designed to be a reminder of what they have already studied. It's a bit too late. Maybe you can remember when you were a child going on the bus to school, reading the book in the morning of the exam, it's a little bit late. So what is required is to allow the person to settle the time for work is over, so to offer the person something new to think about or to hang into - there is no point. This system is closing down therefore the person who is being with the person who is dying needs to put themselves in the place of an energy which is lowering in tone and being a spacious presence.

One of the things that gets in the way of that is our desire to help. We feel there must be something done. Kierkegaard in his very interesting little book *The Gospel of Suffering* says the beauty of suffering is that something must be done. Now, in the suffering of deaths there is nothing to do so if you feel that you as the helper have to validate your existence by doing something, you actually get in the way of a process which has its own momentum. So the first thing to be willing to do is to become useless. Your more useful if you are useless. Because. The ordinary utility you would have with someone if they are upset, you might sit down and talk with them, or make them a cup of tea, or take them for a walk or cook them a meal, you would actively engage to bring some comfort to their situation. Here somebody is moving beyond comfort, they are moving beyond restoration, the way back is closed. So this is a one way journey now. So it's all about letting go, so the helper has to let go of their active capacity to do something and to be available on the different registers so that as the person system is closing down, they also close down. So as the person moves down through these levels of the five elements into space, sitting and being very peaceful and just open. Nothing else to do. No need for any thoughts no need for any emotions, just open - letting go. This creates a mood which is very helpful.

When somebody is dying in a hospital it's usually quite different, they are often on a ward where there is noise and people are coming and going, people want to draw the curtains. There might be drips there might be medication being applied and so on, all the more reason to be very peaceful. And to try to bring some mode of calm into the situation. It's always useful to speak to

the person first and say, " How would you like me to be with you? " " Do you want to see my face as you are going? " Then you can sit in a place where they can see you. Some people don't want they just, the visual capacity is fading. But how you position yourself should also try to arrange with the person before they go. Anyway not sitting too close because if you're going to sit still for quite a while you want to make yourself comfortable, {04:39} so that you will be relaxed. And that involves quite a bit of planning if you have other people involved, who goes to the toilet when, and so on. Because if you get up and you make a noise when somebody's just vanishing that's also not very helpful.

What to do for them? There is nothing to do for them. They are going into space and they will be in that space and then they will be having experiences. So, they are moving from external stimuli, sights, sounds in the environment to a place where they enter the final stages of death, the sense are not picking up so much information, and much more the field of internal experience is arising as if they are going into a dream time. Again the key thing is just to be relaxed and open, you can support yourself by doing that by relaxing to the out breath and just free. Not thinking about them not thinking about anything else, not caught up in thoughts, just in space, so there is space for whatever is happening. Because it's the reactivity that is upsetting. If you can't respond and someone is active near you that's quite kind of disturbing. So peace is the central function and that means that we have to know that someone is dying.

So, it's not the time to say goodbye it's too late, you have to say goodbye earlier on. So it's always good to say goodbye to people you know and really say goodbye because you may not see them again. And if you see them and they are dying, it's not the time to say all the things that have never been said. This kind of melodrama of the deathbed scene was very popular in literature in 1850's and so on. Everybody crying round the bed, holding their hand, " I will see you in heaven, oh I will remember you." What's the point? It's just a lot of agitation. The person is going there is nothing to say. The time for speaking is gone, "oh but" it's gone. Which means again you have unfinished business usually on both sides especially if you're sitting with a friend whose dying not maybe professionally but you're with someone and death is slicing through. A friendship, a relationship is a process of toing and froing of communication, mythic is a never-ending conversation. It's an infinite conversation that never comes to an end, there is always something to be said. Each idea brings a response and a response and a response. And now it's impossible, it's gone.

This is very big, which is why silence is a very important part of practice. We have the silence which is destroyed by sound and we have the silence which is the medium through which sound is moving. So the more we can appreciate silence in all planes in all domains the better it is, because we need to have silence in the presence of the incapacity to speak. The importance of speaking is the importance of communication that is to say, if you look at it in the general Mahayana frame, we have these two aspects of wisdom and compassion. When we're being in the world with others this is the realm of compassion, that is to say it is the domain of the intermingling of the energies of communication. When we meditate we are balancing this by opening the domain of wisdom, being present with the emergence of phenomena as they arise and pass. Wisdom and compassion are inseparable they are two aspects of the same form.

They are not two opposites. When somebody is dying it looks like the time for compassion for busyness but really it's the time for wisdom.

So when the person is sick is really the time for compassion you need to do things for them and make sure they are not lying in wet sheet and all the rest of it, but as the person moves into death it tilts to being a time for wisdom, for space, for depth, for light and just the acceptance - oh is going. So when we sit in meditation and we allow thoughts to arise and pass and we experience being less and less involved in these thoughts and see them drifting just as the clouds pass through the summer, there's no need to respond to them, they're allowed to be there and gone. That's positioning for death and for us as meditation practitioners when we come to our own death if it's in circumstances where we have the opportunity that's the practice to do. Relaxing and just opening to what is occurring.

So sensations arise in the body, maybe some fearful memory maybe some longing, must letting it go. We are training ourselves in the practice of not having to respond to every hook that arises so that at the time of death instead of being pulled this way and that, you just open to space to whatever emerges. So this is at the heart of the dzogchen view to death and it's not different from the dzogchen approach to anything else. Because in dzogchen it's always, if you cut the root the whole tree falls over, you don't need to have many different techniques. If you understand this one thing it's enough.

Meditation and non-meditation

Ok so, we can do some undirected quite sitting, relax into the out breath then open and be present with whatever is there. 'Being present with', means being present with what we take to be the object and what we take to be the subject. So it means we want to have a balance even attention to what we take to be ourselves and what we take to be our not self. And it's in that middle point that we start to experience openness of awareness. So when we are sitting, although we have a familiar sense of *here I am in my body, I am doing the practice, I am focusing my mind*. We have to immediately recognize this is an experience. This is not the kind of home base this is not where we are living, this is our experience. Otherwise the body is taken for granted it's taken as something that can be removed from the picture because it's always the same it doesn't have to be examined and our attention is to what is happening as it were to me - whereas me is also one of the things that is happening to me. So registering the facticity of the changing experience in the sense of one's self and of everything else which is occurring holding these two in non-duality - that's the heart of the focus.

Problems in meditation

This kind of practice is called the meditation of non-mediation because generally when you have a meditation practice you know in advance precisely what you have to do, you have to observe your breath, or visualise a deity or recite a mantra or make prostrations. But in this practice all

we are doing is attending to whatever is occurring and it's quite unpredictable what the content of that occurrence is going to be. So it's not that we are meditating in anything we don't have a clear intention rather we're meditating with whatever forms are occurring. There are many kinds of problems that can arise in this kind of meditation, particularly the difficulty in relaxing and opening to begin with so that we find ourselves locked into a familiar stream of thoughts. And because this is very usual to us we don't know how to get out of it and we seem to be carried along by the flow of thoughts.

The exit to this is to look closely to - who is the one who is being carried away by thoughts? On the inside it appears to be us that is immersed inside this continuous stream of experience but we know that we are experiencing it. We are both participant and observer simultaneously. From the ego side we are tilted towards being the participant, from the awareness side we are tilted towards being the observer. Recognising the inseparability of these two positions simply remain present with whatever is occurring. Presence is non participative. So maybe you have some kind of heavy dreary thoughts that are a bit tired, you're not sure what you're doing, you're wondering about aches in your body, something like that and it all seems quite interesting and just what you're in. Without changing the content, allow yourself to know this is what I'm in. This is experience, this is experience. Who is the experiencer? If you raise that even as a very gentle question you start to get some answers - I am the experiencer and so on. Stay with the presence of these answers, do they endure? Do they have an ongoing truth to them? We find that they also are impermanent and pass away.

So just by staying with what is going on without trying to change it you will start to see definitely everything is vanishing, everything is vanishing. There is no mental state that endures for a long time. Even if it's a mood of depression, hopelessness, anxiety these moods always have fluctuations inside them - because they are activity. They are movements of the mind. So it's not that we are caught by a thought and trapped inside it for a long time, we also are playing a game. When the thought catches us we are also catching the thought because being involved with thoughts is the familiar thing.

So this is a very common problem in meditation, how to free yourself from the thought. And the answer is the thought will go free if you leave it alone. So not being troubled by being caught you will find that free but by worrying about thought you will be more caught. So here when in the tradition they say, don't enter into judgement, don't evaluate, don't attribute this is good this is bad. We just allow the mind to be as it is. In the Tibetan text write a lot about this, it's like a stream tumbling down a mountain side the water goes whichever way it goes because the winds blowing on it. So many things happen in the mind. Don't try to control the mind, let it be free because there is enough space - "Oh, but my mind is going in a direction I don't like". So now you have two things, you have the content of the mind and the judgement about the content of the mind. Don't block either, "Oh I shouldn't be judging and making these judgements about the content of my mind". You can have an infinite regression, don't worry. No matter how much of an elaboration you make the mind is big enough to allow mountains of shit. You are not crazy enough to fill the dharmadhatu. There will always be space.

So even if the mind is running all over the place and you feel disturbed and confused and you don't know what's going on trust this is just empty signifiers moving through space, this is simply movements of energy. So because otherwise we go into hopelessness, resistance, boredom and so on and these lead to energetic adaptations in the body which close the small channels down. Then we get sleepy, we get tired, listless and so on. We all know this from our experience. So again and again, just being present, just here. You can just support yourself very lightly, one slow out breath here, then whatever is coming let it come, whatever is going let it go.

Ok so let's sit again for a little while.

Merit and virtue

When we take refuge we are looking for protection of some kind. We can protect ourselves with many different things, we can protect ourselves with knowledge, with information and that requires effort. If we want to learn a language we have to turn our minds towards that task and practice it again and again until we have some competency.. Once we have learned some fluency that brings a sense of ease. So our general sense is that effort has to proceed ease and so in the Mahayana tradition is we are to go through these accumulations of merit and wisdom this requires effort, the effort culminates in the experience of Buddhahood or enlightenment and this is a state of ease.

As we have been looking, from the view of dzogchen we start with ease as the view, ease is the ground, ease is the path and ease is fruit. So in that way it is different from the normal way of proceeding. Merit, however, is also important because unless we are relaxed in this open state we are caught up in the turbulence of our separate self-referential ego formation, we are caught up in self-reflection and even if we are not self-reflecting there is a self-reflexive quality to all our mental activity.

A reflex action is like if someone sticks a pin in your arm it will jump, it's an instant feedback looping. If I say I'm going to London it's as if I'm giving you some information about myself but I'm also subtly confirming myself to myself as somebody who exists and who is going to do something. So every time we are speaking every time we do something making a cup of tea, embedded in that is a subtle affirmation of our existence as an individual agent. So, this is why the difference between ordinary sense of self and awareness is very important to understand, because awareness has no feedback looping, it's no seeking confirmation of itself because there is nothing to be confirmed.

In the Tibetan language they say it's a *rangjung*, *rangjung rigpa* means an awareness which is arising or self-existing, that means it is valid in and of itself. In the Tibetan language they have many words that begin *ye* or *ka* which means primordial from the very beginning. It means it just is, it just is there where as we as individuals are not just here we are constructs, we are constructing ourselves all the time. And in order to ensure that the construction is ok we have these feedback loops so we live as a self-correcting mechanism. We have a we are always

working out what is going on and when people lack that they get difficulties, for example in ordinary conversation when you are talking with someone you take turns, you speak a little bit and then you pause even though you have more to say and you let the other person speak. For many children this is quite a difficult thing to learn they start taking and keep talking so you have to interrupt them and say. "Hey come on someone else can speak." Most children learn that for example in psychotherapy group work you'll encounter people who have very little sense of the existence of other people. And so when they are silent they are not listening to other people and when they are talking they are certainly not talking to anyone except themselves. And so they don't live in the dialogical domain they are monologic. And in that there is a lack of a feedback loop that says my intention in speaking is to connect with another person, therefore I need to ensure that the connection is there by giving the other person the opportunity to confirm that they are in contact with me. That's the normal way in which we confirm to ourselves that we are ok. But if you feel very empty and desolate inside then your like and empty balloon and so the act of speaking is like blowing up a balloon. If you stop blowing it starts to deflate and so talking and talking and talking you talk yourself into existence. Then the other person's presence is dangerous because you don't know what to do with what they are saying. They are going to interrupt the trajectory of your own self-definition. And on a bad day we have probably all experienced that, we get into a particular mood we get very angry or disappointed and we talking about it and somebody tries to be helpful and they add some idea me we say basically shut up I'm telling you about me. There's so much more to say and you feel this kind of need to express and extrude or dump all this material.

So the person who is not in touch with the feedback loop is not an enlightened state at all they are even worse off because although there is a kind of liberation in not attending to other people {06:26} we do live in a world of other people and so we bang into them. So that kind of structure which is often described as borderline personality disorder, it's very, very prevalent nowadays and it's essentially about miss attunement that to tune into the environment is to tune into a field that you are part of. So if you tune into the environment and have a sense of how it is then you can fine-tune yourself in order to stay in the melody that is being played. Of course what that means is you have got to have multiple melodies. If you only have one tune or one song in your head and everyone is singing something different what do you do? Either you shut up or you run across them - there are not many options. So, developing an range of possibilities a range of movements is very important.

So again for example we see in the story of Padmasambhava that he has eight main forms and they say he has a hundred thousand other forms. So Padmasambhava shows himself as very peaceful, very simple, as very wild and crazy, very angry and controlling, very scary, he has many different moods and modality that arise in the relation other people. So if you say, who is the real Padmasambhava? There is nobody there. There is the potential which in his case exists as a letter *hung* in his heart and out of this *hung* infinite forms can manifest. The *hung* represents the potential, the energy of awareness. Each of us also have that we are many different people. The important thing here is that very often we are expressing into the world is primarily self-referential in its intention because we are on about something, we are preoccupied we are caught up in some event that has happened to us, or disappointment or anxiety and so we are

coming into a formation which is actually dislocated from the field of experience is that we share with other people.

Padmasambhava's forms are coming into relation with the field. So how does he do that? He does it by not being centred in a prefigured ego, that is to say he doesn't start with a self-position thinking this is me, this is how I feel today, I didn't sleep well last night, I'm in a bad mood, give me some space. People can look a little bit grumpy in the morning if they - oh ok I think I will sit at another table. Fair enough. But that person is not available to themselves. It's not a crime to be yourself but what it does mean that you are in a world of one. {10:05} From the dharma point of view what we are wanting to do is to relax into the open space, this infinite empty space has potential to manifest many forms. How will arise? Who are we arising for? That's the central question, which is profound because it essentially means, what is the meaning of life?

So in the teaching it says, we have these three aspects of our existence, dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. Dharmakaya means the empty ground nature of being that is to say, the basis of our existence is openness there is nothing there. If you really experience this is very peaceful, it's complete, it's satisfying. So traditionally we say, the dharmakaya is for yourself. The other two aspects, the sambhogakaya which is to experience oneself in the non-dual radiance, mother field of experience and the nirmanakaya to manifest oneself in precise formation moment by moment - these are for the other. So space is ourselves, there is our root home where we can relax and when we manifest this is the movement of compassion, movement is compassion. So our being in the world is being in the world for others. This is very radical because it means that one's orientation is not selfish. Everything that you do is for the other. For the other doesn't mean you're going around giving out baskets of bread to people it means fundamentally being available, available for contact, available for interaction because you are participating as part of the field. You're in it ness, your belongingness is the starting point not the separation. The ego always starts from separation moves out towards the world, a world which is fundamentally other but if you realise in the practice that the mind itself is infinite there is no boundary to it. Everything that arises is experience, the field of experience includes self and other equally, there is no clear boundary between. So the movement of self and other is the movement of the interactions of energy in shared undivided field.

So compassion means to be connected, that's essentially what it means, non-duality, essentially means connected, it means not just one thing, you can't say everything is just this. Nor is it many different things that there are real self-existing objects out there. But self and other are pulsations or movements which are always influencing each other. So allowing ourselves to be a part of what is going on is very important. So that we change our shape adoring to the setting. That doesn't mean that we are a carpet and we hand the strings over to whoever we meet so that they can pull us into whatever shape they want. It means that the quality of self-energy and the quality of other energy have an integrity which when balanced is mutually satisfying. It's not about competition it's not about winning or losing but profoundly it's about collaboration.

So this is a central question, how do you collaborate with an enemy? Well, first of all you don't have an enemy, our enemy is always somebody who is lost. This is beautiful advantage because you begin in a superior position, it's always good to start at the top. So you see the faults of the other, poor lost creature therefore how will I help them? You have to go to where the lost creature is. So by identifying with the position of the lost one you meet them where they are. This is exactly the story I touched on before of Padmasambhava when he leaves Tibet, he goes off on a flying horse and he arrives in an island to the south of India, most probably Ceylon, which is a land of demons called rakshasas {15:20} And these demons are flesh eating cannibals, very dangerous and very wild, and the King of them is particularly fierce. And Padmasambhava enters into the body of the King and merges completely with the King. And he does that when the king is sleeping and so the next morning he wakes up and "grahhhh" growls at everyone and the people say, "hey the king is in a good mood." But gradually slowly, slowly, the King becomes softer and as he becomes softer because of the influence of the systemic field of interaction, everyone around him becomes a little bit softer. And so there is a transformation.

This is a very, very helpful way of thinking about proceeding, because if he had thought these demons are very bad, I am a very good person I'm going to convert the demons. How would this work? The demons say, "we don't like you, go away or we'll eat you." "Shut up, don't knock on my door." "Are you another kind of Mormon, go away." "I don't want to hear the good news. Your good news is my bad news so shut up." So poor old Padmasambhava would be swimming back to Tibet. So he shows the form of relating by not going to opposition, because as soon as you say *I strongly disagree with you your wrong*, the fixity which I perceive in your position creates a parallel fixity in my position, because I am defining myself by the law of exclusion. I know who I am and it certainly not who you are. And in order to maintain myself definition I have to continue disagreeing with you, because if I were to agree with you I would stop being me. So we can see how these endless political religious conflicts continue in that way.

So compassion here is something very, very interesting it's about the flexibility of our potential, our availability to be in connection, to practice empathic attunement, cognitive attunement so that you really move towards the topology of the others existence. And find as close an interface as possible. And in that movement which is non-violent and non-aggressive open up some space for the other to unfold and realise more of their potential. Because that's the thing, nobody is small according to the view of dzogchen everybody is infinite. So when people take up a very narrow position that is because they are clearly in forgetfulness of their own nature, they are caught up in self-definition through an idea that they belong to a particular tribe, that they belong to a particular gender or sexual orientation or age group or race, nationality whatever it would be. Because I am like this, or who are different from me - my enemy. And we can see that we live in a competitive, conflictual capital system at the moment which is full of tension because it is structured primarily on the notion of winning and losing. Whereas the veil of dzogchen is of everybody has the potential to win because of infinity. Most structures are zero sum games, that is to say they work on the fantasy of there being limited resources. And then if some group appropriates a lot of these resources there is no scope for everyone else.

In Berlin if I recall 1850, there was a big conference which was a conference for dividing up Africa in which the different European countries took a slice of Africa. Which is why the countries of Africa had very straight lines for borders. France and Germany and so on don't have straight lines because you had to fight for your borders. But when someone else just takes a map and draws a straight line on it like the border of Iraq and Syria and so on, this is drawn by the French and British. So in this conference Africa was divided up and now we have a new division of Africa going on with the Chinese coming in. And they are buying up the access to the natural resources quickly so of course the Americans start to be worried but nowadays the Chinese have a lot more money to spend than the Americans. And so in that way we have the sense of winning and losing. The Chinese are going to win so we became very frightened, what will we do if they win? So of course the most important thing is to become friendly with the guys who might win and not go into fearful opposition to them.

This is the basic principle, once you establish a clear definition of who you are and who the other is you go into a very limited game because there is only so much like a hundred units and the inside that hundred units somebody gets sixty, there's only forty left for you. Whereas if the game is an infinite game, you can have sixty, I can have hundred. What I get doesn't diminish you because the space of expansion of my being is the infinite space of dharmadhatu not a finite space. Which is why finding satisfaction in the infinite spaciousness of the mind is much less troublesome to society than finding satisfaction by having the biggest car in your village. Because if you go into competition it provokes more competition.

All of this in relation to death is that it is important to practice the accumulation of merit. That is to say, to practice virtue to be thoughtful. In dzogchen practice we believe virtue arises spontaneously out of relaxation because the thing about the ego is that it always carries an energetic charge it pulses between positive and negative, winning and losing, aversion and attraction, desire or appropriation. So merit is a way of consciously supporting our intention to act for the other, for the other here means with the other. How do we act for people? By thinking about what might be beneficial for them. So there are many kinds of ways of accumulating merit in Buddhism. For example traditionally feeding meditators living in caves and so on we don't have so many of these in Europe, supporting the production of symbols so for example someone would sponsor the printing of some prayer flags and hang these up in the mountain pass so that good wishes would spread in the world. And some of these symbols seem to be quite nice in Europe there seems to be a general acceptance that Tibetan prayer flags are a cool thing to have so you could hang more of these, you could probably hang them in a public park near you - people don't seem to object to them. And it creates something colourful warming but also the principle behind it, as the wind flutters it takes the semantic and energetic quality of the messages printed on them which are good wishes to all beings, brings them out and spreads them into the world.

You can be involved in helping people to understand something useful, so for example people here are engaged in different kinds of thinking about how in a gentle way some kind of dharma principles may be offered out. So like making a film, like writing songs through poetry, there are many cultural forms in which in a non-evangelical, non-intentional propagation non dogmatic

way, you can invite people to reflect on impermanence, you can invite people to reflect on the fact that they are going to die. So what will you do with your life? What is the meaning of your life? In that way it's very useful to examine how your time is structured, if you knew you were going to die in a month's time would you continue doing what you do now? And if you think you would change what you are doing now, then why are you doing what you are doing now? Because clearly then you are doing it in a fantasy. In a fantasy that you will live forever. So many of the things we do we do simply because they reassure us about our ordinary sense of identity. That's a pretty weak reason to spend this precious life which can end very, very soon. None of us know how long we will live.

So you can look at where you live, for examples at your possessions - do you have a lot of things you don't need? What are you doing with them? You can give them away to people, who need them, you could sell them and give the money to a charity, any charity that is helping people around the world. You could give them to Buddhist charity to print books to give more education to refugees - there are many, many ways of using things. Because it's a very interesting, I'm very addicted to second hand bookshops and to junk shops so very often they are full of the possessions of people who have died and it's always fascinating because you go into a shop like that with some hope, you find something nice and after half an hour you think this is just rubbish, my god. And you imagine at one time all this rubbish was in somebody's house and that they spent hard earned money to buy this rubbish. But for them it was not rubbish. For them it was treasure or pots or their plates. This was their life, so this was an invested object and because it had a sentimental value, it doesn't seem to have a clear objective aesthetic value but it had a sentimental value. And then you can return home and look at what you have in your house and see that it largely is full of things with sentimental value. Books that you last read thirty years ago that know that you will never read again but you wouldn't like to let go of. Because it reminds you maybe of studying, or a group you used to be in or some teaching that you did. So its function is to remind you of who you have been. In a sense by seeing these familiar objects they hold the shaping of yourself in place.

Attachment and acceptance

And so when we see how this functions externally we can also start to see how it functions internally that we have a sentimental attachment, many kinds of thoughts, memories, emotions because when they arise they feel like me. This is how I feel like this is the kind of thought I have in my head and therefore there is an implicit attachment to that thought because it's serving the function of reassuring me of the continuity of my personal sense of identity. Therefore when we sit in the meditation and just let thoughts come and go, it's very difficult to do that because this thought when it arises, it's not this explicit semantic content that is important but rather the familiarity of its patterning is confirming the continuity of the sense of myself. You know sometimes we get a thought and think, "wow that's weird where did that come from?" you wouldn't be having that surprised feeling if most of your thoughts were like that. That would indicate that most of the thoughts and feelings that we have feel familiar and of course familiarity brings a kind of invisibility. So the usualness habitual nature of these mental arising

makes it very difficult to see that actually they have developed due to causes and conditions, they are not innate, they are not generated out of an essence of yourself but paradoxically the continual presence of these thoughts is what generates epiphenomena which you take to be the core essence of yourself. Does that make sense?

So by maintaining these thoughts you, are day by day, moment by moment constructing the essence which feels to be the already given centre of your world. So that's a real confusing movement that's going on. Which is why it's very useful to imagine being a dog, imagine, being a worm, imagine being a fly. It's quite a nice thing to do if in the summer time a fly comes into your house and you see it on the glass then just go behind it and go {James makes the sound of a fly} if you do that for a while to see that the fly has a particular kind of life. Or if you're out in the country and you see a worm you can lie in the ground and go like a worm and see what that's like. See a little bird hopping, you can hop. This is what that's like for the bird, it's very normal to be a bird, for the worm it's very normal to be a worm and for me it's very normal to be me.

Now if we have some sense of the continuity of our awareness after death and some sense that we might be reborn in another life, it's very important to know that we could be something very different. We cannot prove whether or not there are future lives, even if we don't take it as a truth, but hold it simply as a metaphors then if you identify with a bird this will open much more sympathy and empathy for the state of that creature and it will also relativise our centrality of being fixed as who you are, like the centre of the world where everything's coming to you.

One of the more difficult things in the Christian tradition, it's also the Jewish tradition it's in the book of Genesis, where there is the sense that God having created the world and all the creatures in it gives man as a human being minion over them. So there is then an entitlement to use these as adjuncts of oneself, extensions of oneself. So it means then that you don't mean to be stopped by the suffering of these other creatures because they are for you, they are not for them. And if open up an empathic identification with them you can see that life take many different forms, that all these creatures have a kind of intentionality. When you see little birds like sorrows feeding, they are hopping and they eat a little bit then they look - "where's the cat, where's the cat, mmmm where's the cat, where's the cat, whereas the cat." you see the joy in eating and paranoia about death is completely together at the same time. What would that be like? Very frightening. {05:27} We think of sweet little birds nice to see them in the garden but for them, life and death is there all the time. It's not a stable way to be at all.

So in that way we can use our creative imagination to pour ourselves into the different objects of the world and get a sense of what it would be like to inhabit that. And then through that return we see that we are inhabiting this form, this is the role I have in the current theatre of my existence. When I was young I had a different set of roles, I had a different kind of body, I spoke language in a different way, I played different games. {06:10} I ate different food, I did many different things. Now at this age this is how my role is evolving and if I live another twenty years or so it will again be very different. . Therefore again my existence is performative it is a showing or display. It's not something which is self-existing, not something which is true in itself but something which is revealed in interaction with others therefore linking it back, the key thing

is, what is my motive in my interaction with others? Is it to reassure myself that I'm ok? Is it to get from others what I need in order to feel ok? Or is to enjoy the basic experience of intercourse? We know that sexual intercourse can be pleasurable, we know that aesthetic intercourse like going to a gallery and seeing a beautiful picture can be pleasurable. The question is, can the intercourse that occurs all the time through our sense organs be pleasurable?

In the Buddhist text you see lots of words about 'great bliss', 'great happiness', 'great joy' and so on. These can be achieved as kind of peak experience and moments through particular kinds of yoga and so on, but because they are generated by a specific activity they do not last very long. In the dzogchen the main focus is to experience the activity of the sense organs as movements in the field of light which is pleasurable however it is. That's why it says in the text - 'if you go to heaven go to heaven and if you go to hell go to hell' it's not saying when you're up there be very, very happy and when you're down there be very unhappy. It means even in the moment of difficulty of knowing maybe that you're sick, knowing that you're dying, losing your job, the breakup of a relationship, the children getting into difficulties - even in these situations which are miserable, which are unsatisfying, which make you feel shrinking and a bit collapsed. Even there, if you don't abandon yourself into the semantic content of the moment, that is to say if you don't get carried away by the narrative, but you hold the narrative and the experience, the experience itself is full. So when you're sad you can be sad, and sadness itself is satisfying because that's what it is.

It's like if you go to an Indian restaurant for the first time and you eat something with really a lot of chilli in it "wow - what is that?" "That's chilli". So when you eat chilli that's what you get, if you say, "ooo it's not good, it's too hot for me, I don't like it" you're entitled to do that, but what is it - it's chilli. Chilli tastes like that, that's what it is. Salt tastes like this, bitter tastes like that. That is a particular flavour. Usually we don't eat a lot of bitter substances, but bitter is a taste, bitter is sometimes a sign that something is poisonous but a lot of bitter things are not poisonous for us. When you eat something bitter it's bitter, "I don't like bitter" "it won't kill you" "I don't like that sort of experience" - but it's in the world. So this is always the place we can go, we sit with our self-referential definition and reject a lot of experience and we say it's not what I want, I don't like it, I don't know what to do with it, I would prefer something else - or we can open ourselves to what is occurring. I'm sad, I don't want to be sad, I shouldn't be sad, I'm sad. It's exactly the same as I'm dying because you can't deal with being sad, if you can't deal with being rejected, being lonely, how are you going to deal with dying? People don't usually know what to do.

So opening ourselves to the full range of experience and inhabiting them, offering hospitality to whatever arises is the best way in dealing with life and death. Because we spend a lot of time doing micro adjustments to try and make the world fit us and to try to make us fit the world. Rather than just being with it, this is how it is, there is nothing to think about. For example people in Britain comment about the weather endlessly, merely complain about it and in London people complain about it the transport system. A lot of it is unpleasant, but the question is why shouldn't it be unpleasant? Well intellectually we can imagine redesigning the transport system so that the trains are longer and the queues that people could start work at different times of

the day. We could reorganise the world, many people have tried that kind of thing and it doesn't really work. Starling was the great example - were better off without dictators. So if we don't have a dictator we are going to have degree of confusion, but we don't like the confusion. So now we have the question, what status do you give to your negative emotion? Something is arising for you, it has landed on your plate it's your life, you can't slip it off into someone else's plate - it's yours. How do you deal with that? If you enter into judgement and say it's not good, I don't like it, I don't want it, it's not fair all the various ways we have of highlighting to ourselves and to other people a Resistencia to what is actually there. These moves don't usually take it off the plate, it's still there but it's even worse because you've pissed on your own experience.

So how to accept how your life is? Some people are very healthy, some people come from wealthy families, some people are born beautiful, some people are not born beautiful, some people have a lot of luck in relationship, other people have very little luck in relationship, some people are successful in their career some are not. Some people need to wear glasses from the age of three some people never need to wear glasses, some people need a hearing aid, some people can hardly climb the stairs all sorts of things happen in our lives. So how do we be ourselves? Means this is it, this is my existence the fact that someone else is getting another existence is irrelevant. How do I stay relaxed and open with this situation? So this takes you back to the five root afflictions, what are called the five poisons. They are all generated from ignorance and ignorance here means not a lack information it's not a cognitive deficit it means a kind of ontological misplacement that is to say you cease to recognise your own nature. Therefore you have to invent your nature or invent your identity.

The first of these poisons afflictions arising from this is stupidity or the word for it in Tibetan means a kind of mental dullness a kind of opaqueness where you don't see things clearly. So it's constellated out of assumptions, reification, objectification, seeing the world as full of things, taking oneself to be a thing and being confused about what's going on. {15:43} that is to say it's living a life without clarity. Because of this one is then assuming the over identification with the individual state and identity as linked absolutely to the body, and because of that we have to protect our body means push away things we don't like, bring things to us we do like. Because of that when things go well we have pride 'look what I've got' and also we have envy, 'oh you have more than me'. I need what you have, we have pride and jealousy and this fans out into many other afflictions. These are all moves that arise because of living in a limited notion of ourselves. If you accept how you are, it doesn't really matter how other people are. In the very common seven branch practice in Tibetan Buddhism, one section of this seven is called in Tibetan, *je sui rang wa* which we don't really have in English but it means something like, rejoicing in the happiness of others. And they say that if you rejoice in the success and happiness of other people you get the equal success for yourself. So it's a way of deconstructing envy, if you see, say for example you know you're dying and you see other people having happy lives and they have a lot fulfilment 'may they be happy', rather than thinking "nasty bastards, I hate you your having all that I don't have".

Greek tragedy like Medea and so on are full of these kinds of stories of thwarted ambition and the bitterness, the sourness that goes with that - "you have something nice, I will kill you for

stealing it from me, taken what is really mine". Most tragedy is like that Shakespearean tragedy is nothing but that kind of story, the story of loss and the fearful notion of revenge and overriding ambition which takes people. The exit from this according to dzogchen is always the same, this is why dzogchen is very useful, it one key that opens every door. It says rest in your own nature just relax, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter if other people are very successful, if they have good luck let them have good luck. They are not stealing your luck, your luck is what you get. So if you're in a relationship and your partner goes off with somebody else that's your luck {laughter} that's what you've got. To go into some big story about why did they do that and that's not fair, that bitch and I'll scratch her eyes out. Well what's the point of that? Your luck is always what you have. And what you have is something you can deal with. Other people's luck is very little you can deal with. But we tend to be very busy trying to interfere with other people to make their luck our luck. This is very busy and unhelpful.

So when we sit in the meditation we accept whatever come comes. In the same way in life, whatever comes come. I work in a public mental health system, many, many changes are happening in Britain because the government cutting everything. Many of the decisions that are made I think are ridiculous. But I am in the system so I have to do things which are completely stupid, but I have to do them. This is very, very helpful kind of experience because I want to say what about me, for example, I have to do on the computer training, training in dual diagnosis on mental health and addiction studies. I myself work in addiction units for maybe ten years so I'm doing a basic programme that everybody has to do. And I want to say, " hey hey, I know all these things I could write the fucking training for you". But no, if I don't do it, I get an email from the manager saying " you have not completed this training, if you don't complete it, our mental health trust will be fined so many thousands of pounds by the department of health, because we have to have national compliance so that we can guarantee that all our staff are trained in this." It's beautiful! So I am being reduced to a number {21:02} I am being told you don't exist, you are just a number. So we are in the territory of Franz Kafka and George Orwell and we know this story form the 1930's it's very dangerous but we see it happening everywhere.

Now should one be political and protest? You could do that a little, but from a point of view of a meditator we have to say 'Ah, this is what is happening' these are all the emotions that arise. Something must be done, what is it? I am being shaped by the world. I cannot shape the world and make it the way I want it. This is painful. In the hospital people are going in every day for operations, some come out without a leg, some come out without an eye, some come out without a bit of their liver - that's what happens to people. Some go in walking in two legs and come out in a wheelchair. Life happens. How do you inhabit the life you have? We are so energised towards mobilising and acting on the object world, if changing the object situation would be real, would bring real benefit, but from the point of view of meditation much more important is - how to inhabit your existence because there are many, many situations in life that no matter how ethical you are, strong willed you are, good hearted you are - you cannot change. And particularly that applies to death.

So if you spend your life struggling, struggling against the dying of the light, this great kind of theme, ' no we will fight, we will resist it' it will get you in the end. John Wayne the great

American hero, riding his horse and firing his gun, he's going to better the big C, and of course in the end he died of cancer. He had a lot of operations and he got through many stages of cancer but sooner or later he died. Sooner or later we all have to die. Dying, is a letting go process, if you spend your life feeling you should dominate hand control what is going on, it's very difficult to make that change. It doesn't mean you have to be passive like a piece of clay and let everyone else mould you and shape you. But it's getting the right balance. Western democracy has given the people a sense of entitlement that we should be ourselves, actualise ourselves, fulfil our potential. But the priapic nature of this is harmful. It's very dangerous. When men get an erection that can be pleasurable, usually it doesn't last so long, but some men get a condition where the erection lasts an hour, now three hours, four hours, five hours, at that point they should be going to a hospital because it's very dangerous to have that priapic condition, because you start to get clotting, then you start to get very serious damage to body.

So being erect for too long is not a good idea, enough is important but not too long. The same way with the ego, when the ego is priapic and your domination mode it's not a good idea. For a time and then collapse. So of course in the tantric system the imagery of masculine and feminine the vagina and the penis moving together in the Hindu system as well, it means exactly this. Moving out taking up space in the world, relaxing and being the salve that receives the world. And the pulsation between these two is very important. There is a time to come forward and take up a shape, create and do things, and there's a time to just open and accept. This is the nature of death, and we have to open and accept what is happening. We just have to be with that unfolding. And this is of course the advantage of meditation, meditation is generally moving into the sphere of the feminine, which is a kind of metaphor of course. But the notion of the great mother Prajnaparamita is that she is emptiness itself. This is linked to the womb and they say all Buddhas are born through the womb of the great mother means you have to enter into emptiness to realise your Buddhahood. You have to let go of all the somethings that you are to merge in this infinite nothingness so that your potential to manifest in different ways can arise.

So opening in this wisdom side, emptiness, feminine side in the meditation and that end of the meditation we manifest the world. The manifestation is arising out of the emptiness, it never escapes the emptiness. So in that sense all our is inside the womb of the great mother. A bit like Plato's cave we imagine all sorts of things are outside are real and strong and true but we are living in this world of illusions. They are just dreams, they are fantasies like rainbows in the sky. So the movement into form is inseparable from emptiness, so it's not that you're in meditation and your very open then you get up and you get on with your day and you're in yourself. The openness of meditation and the movement of the day need to become inseparable so that in everything that you do, walking, talking, sleeping, eating, the penis of manifestation and the vagina of emptiness are completely merged. They don't merge into one thing, neither are they different but there is a union a moving together which is the integration { 28:03 }

So this is the goal so that moving into expression being strong, being clear, being decisive when necessary this can manifest and then without having to change gear or become something, very gently your very soft. And then strong, soft, angry, selfish, moving through all of these positions and all within the great space of emptiness. So this is the general way in which one can think of

bringing whatever experiences that comes in our lives, holding it inside the state of awareness or presence. When we make activity strongly real, when we invest in it, it becomes more difficult which is why as part of the general preparations for death, as I was saying developing merit, by doing things like giving away your possessions. This is important because then you really see for yourself, 'I don't want to give it away' 'oh I got this from my grandmother.' When you die and go into the bardo you won't have any grandmother, you won't have any remembrance of your grandmother, this is a temporary narrative in this life. This is very important, it's important for me in the basis of what? On the basis of what it is. Ok. You go out in the street and you invite someone to come into the house and you show them the table and you say, "what do you think about that table?" they say, "I don't know" "how much do you think it's worth?" "Twenty euros. Fifty euros." "Ah, this is from my grandmother." "O!" OK - you take some medication because grandmother doesn't really add any value unless grandmother was very rich and brought a very wonderful table. The fact that it was your grandmother's is in your head it's not in the table. The value is projected from you into the object. And when you feel that the value is in the object there you have the raw intensity of duality. The table has caught you because you have told the table you are important and the table tells you I am important. Yes you are important.

This is like when you were a child and you go to the fair and they have a Punch and Judy kind of marionette show and you have two little things coming out "Ah behave" "ah no. No. No." And then one man gets up and he takes a bow, oh one man was all these different people. This is us. We speak to the table, the table speaks back, "Ah oh very lovely table." "Yes, I've come from your grandmother. Don't abandon your grandmother." This is the dialogic construction of our existence. So renunciation is very important there's not very much that we need. We live in a culture that encourages us to have a lot of things but these things actually become ways of projecting bits of ourselves. So if you have three things, split yourself in three. If you have three hundred things you split yourself into three hundred pieces and bits of you are invested in all of these things. This is quite difficult because the path is about collecting ourselves, recollecting ourselves. The Tibetan word *drenpar* which means kind of attention, in dzogchen means to stay precisely in the natural state means really to collect, to bring your yourself into one point, not to be dispersed. But this is difficult not to be dispersed in your mind and emotions if your practical life you are dispersed.

This notion of multi-tasking which is favoured that people should be very busy doing many different things is an abomination. The cult of working very long hours which is coming from America is another abomination. People in America very often have two weeks of holiday a year, and long, long hours why? They are feeding the God of the machine which devours them. People have known this for a very long time, poets like John Clare, William Blake and so on they have depicted very clearly, and Karl Marx and Freddie Ingalls and so on they are seen very clearly the nature of capitalist consumption. It devours the people who are dedicated to producing it. A few people get the fruits of it but most people don't. They don't understand what is going on, busy all your life doing something - why? 'Because I need the money for the rent for this and that, and this and that. And at the end, "I worked hard and my children they done ok and where were you in all of that?" "Well I did my duty, I did what I had to do. I have my dignity." Now

sixty years ago people would speak in that, now it sounds stupid, me don't even have any dignity. We are just working and working and working and why? Completely crazy.

The reason of making a critique of society and the political structure is important in terms of dharma because it's a way of seeing the kinds of hooks that catch us easily. That we feel are very important, that we should have these experiences, for example you get books - 'a hundred places to see before you die' and for some reason I've got in the mailing list of saga which is an organisation for the over fifties and they send me brochures of cruises I could go on. And they say 'don't waste your retirement enjoy seeing the world.' 'You have to see Egypt.' Why do I have to see Egypt? 'Have you seen South America?' 'No, and I don't want to.' 'No, this will fulfil you - what are your dreams what are fantasies?' In this way there's the idea that now is the time to fill up the lack, spending money, having experience that doesn't last very long - this will fulfil you. Very powerful this kind of seduction. It's selling illusion because you make that journey, it's very nice and nowadays you have your little camera and you take photos all the time - and then what do you do with the photos? Show them to other people, who are bored or envious and so you are increasing their five poisons. You look at them yourself and it's not very interesting - it's gone. If you have stayed at home and done some work in the garden time would also have passed. If you had sat in your bum and done some meditation, time would also have passed. Which was of spending the time is most useful? Which will really give you what you need? So in the dzogchen tradition, recognising your own nature, relaxing into the natural state, observing how all movement and experience arises from that - this is the central point. And through that meaning is generated as we engage in the world with other people. This is absolutely the key.

So now we take a break for half an hour and come back for the final session and so you could reflect if you have any questions about what we have done so far so you can clarify these before we leave.

Question about integrating inside and outside

Question: A question that always comes to me is I mean it's very easy to understand the dzogchen view and the things concerning all activities of the mind, like, if I can see that things appear there inside the mind so they are empty. So it seems that the outer world of course again, I can see the naming of this, it's a process of the mind and the relation I have to it is also this dzogchen view but sometimes I feel like it's only things for the mind, this open space things like this and if I listen to modern physics I can also see that the walls and the bodies are also just movements and there is nothing fixed on it, just a second hand knowledge of course. But I find it difficult how to integrate the all the components, not only the activity of the mind into the view to the meditation and to being part of the, like the whole process. Which I guess it could be but it's not my experience.

James: At the very beginning perhaps it was before you arrived we were doing this body scanning practice. So this is a very good way of experiencing the ever-changing quality of the body because we have many different kinds of bodies. {01:40} We have a kind of anatomical body unpacked through research, dissection and so on, this is a sense is a medical body most of

us don't have that body or at least we don't live that body. If you get sick you go to a doctor who through the lens of their training sees your body through that frame of reference. Most of the time we don't have hearts and lungs and livers we just have ourselves. Walking down the road you're not in touch with what your pelvis is doing and so on. So there is a body which is revealed through a particular kind of information if you don't apply that information you don't have it. In Tibet if you go to the *amchi* the doctor he's not thinking in terms of the western notion of the body system, particularly the newer medical knowledge of the centrality of the endocrine system and so on. But because we're concerned primarily with experience, experience prior to the mediation of knowledge to information of life from the outside, the body which is revealed to us through our own direct experience is our real body. This is particularly true when you're dying because, I remember when my father was sick going to see him in hospital and his lying in the bed and I'm looking at him and above his bed there was a little box going 'Bing, bing bing, bing.' And I look at his face and I look at this thing so which is the real dad? Which thing is showing me the state of my father? The machine shows that maybe his heart is not doing very well, but his face shows him. So I think in that sense we have to avoid the reduction of abstract information it is very useful for particular functions but it takes us away from trust in direct experience. We have a notion, especially in child development that children have a great potential but it has to be mounded. The Tibetan system has this too, in Tibet education in the monastery was often very brutal and we have these old sayings in Europe - 'spare the rod and spoil the child' that is to say if you don't beat the child they won't learn anything and they will be disobedient.

So we have a sense often that our basic nature, our tendencies are not to be trusted, in the European tradition this is grounded in the notion of original sin, that because of the fault of Adam and Eve and being expelled from the garden of Eden, we have a basic tendency to get lost and therefore we have to struggle not to be lost. Therefore because this corruption of badness is inside us we can't trust ourselves so we trust someone else therefore you should rely on your saviour, Jesus Christ who died for your sins and through his blood you will get that. But you yourself are not going to get anything except trouble because the badness is inside you already. Buddhism starts in the other direction it says, our basic nature is good but due to circumstances we get obscurations, confusions and the main thing is to trust ourselves. So this is why faith is important because faith supports us not to just having experience but in living the validity of the experience. Because you can meditate and have some sense of clarity and then you get up and get on with your life and you think that was nice, you know that was like a holiday, like a walk in the forest, my meditation is kind of like a time out, in which the usual ego of conceptualisation takes hold of the experience and incorporates it into the matrix of its explanation. Rather than what we have to do is really completely give ourselves into the experience of the meditation so that that becomes the central touchstone the central testing point and we use that then to put our ordinary life into question.

So when we are scanning through the body we experience this ceaseless flow of sensations of various kinds things, what is pleasant one moment can be unpleasant the next. Tightness goes to slackness. We see this body as a kind of pulsating system. Almost like lights going in and off if you imagine one of these early Hollywood science fiction movies where they would have computer on a spaceship and they would have all these red and green lights and they would

flash in and off, when you do the body scan the bodies like that, bits are appearing and disappearing. This is what it is. My bodies not a thing it's a revelation of transient experience. And I think we do that practice again and again and you really come to a point where you know 'Oh that's what it is' so that when you're walking down the street and you have different sensations or your climbing up the stairs and you feel how your pelvis is moving, and the muscles are tightening and loosening, if you feel it from the inside that is to say if you keep your awareness open to proprioception, to the internal sensations system and you take the immediacy of that it has a direct validity. But if you go to the outside and start to give yourself an explanation and interpretation of what you are experiencing you come back to having a body which is a thing, which is a puzzle to be understood.

So I think that for me is the central issue is to really enter into the practice and carry it into life whatever is happening. So if for example you eat an apple, as you lift the apple in your hand towards your mouth you don't have to tell your mouth to open, your mouth opens automatically. And then as the apple comes into your mouth your jaw starts to close. So in that sense our *being* with the world is enacted in its immediacy. This is very similar to the description you will find in for example in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception where he gives a very beautiful descriptions of embodied being {09:05} and that's actually what we have isn't it? When you have any kind of food and you put it on your fork or your spoon, as your bringing it towards you, your mouth is already moving towards what it's going to eat. So if it's soup your lips are going to catch the soup off the spoon and if it's something big that you have to chew on your getting ready with your tongue to have the main reception, the teeth that are going to chew it up. In the same way as you walk along the stairs, you walk along the floor and you approach the stairs your body prepares to move in a different way. If your walking in the country and the slope is going down the body is adjusting its balance to avoid slipping. That is to say, if you attend to your body and you don't interfere with it with conceptualisation you will experience that your body is a part of the world. That's what the body does through the sense organs there is an immediacy of adaptation to the situation.

And of course as we get older this becomes more difficult because the rigidity in the body resists it. It's like you know if I watch a young person jumping out of a tree into the ground, my body goes {James illustrates} and their body goes bounce. And I think 'Ah, it's a long time since my body was bouncing.' Because the cartilage and the way the muscles go and the way they find their balance they don't harm themselves once they learn to keep their knees a bit open so they don't whack themselves in the chin it's quite safe to that kind of jumping if you're light and flexible.

So relating it to death, one of the problems of getting older is that one becomes more aware of the mechanics of embodiment. The really blissful time, we have a lovely baby here, the really blissful time for small children is like three, four when their starting to be able to move around and they are completely unimpeded they are just going really quickly everywhere. You can just go parents kind of wondering 'Ah ah ah' but there is that kind of joyful sense that something that there you go towards it. You take them to the park and the climbing frame going up and you say 'that's a bit high'. 'No, no'. And off they go because the body and the shaping of the world go

immediately together. So I think when we have these experiences ourselves there we see the non-duality of the body and the environment and also that the body itself is a living relationship with the environment. Because the environment is actually conversational it's calling us into communion with it. I don't know whether that speaks to the issue but I think one has to keep practicing, whether ones eating, going to the toilet, having a shower, washing your hands. You know it's amazing you go to wash your hands, turn the tap on take some soap and immediately your hands doing this. Or you get up in the morning and you go to put your shirt on its fantastic if you think of the amount of movement your body is doing, putting on your trousers, stand in one leg, put your leg down in there - it's a completely fluid motion as long as one is present in it. So in that way you start to experience the body is movement in a world of movement it's not that we're a thing and we have a clunky big world.

So when we sit in the practice this is why we want to include the body in the field of experience in the meditation. So usually we are sitting with our eyes open you can also do it with your eyes closed or just open a little bit, in the traditional style of looking down the line of your nose. Experience is arising, what is the body? So go back this question 'where does the mind stay? In effect this is an enquiry into the nature of embodiment because we have such a sense of living inside this bone box and this is my real home and we have lots of thoughts that organise us in terms of that. But if you allow these thoughts to arise and pass you can really start to feel directly, the experience which I call me and the experience I call the world are co-emergent, they are arising at the same time. So at the moment I am looking at you I can see your face, I can see the light coming in the window is illuminating ones side more than other, I can see your hands are out but I also experiencing myself as I am looking at you, so you are part of my experience and I am part of my experience. I am part of my experience in a different way from you are part of me because I can feel things in my body and I don't feel what is in your body. But both are flows of something arising and passing. I can privilege the sensations in myself as being the proof of my own private existence because I have these, and you don't have access to them, that would be to make a division. But if we just relax and it's just arising and passing. Because if I feel a sensation like at the moment I can feel a slight tension around my diaphragm. My diaphragm - I don't feel a tension in my diaphragm I feel something, where is that something? There, where is there? It's there. Where is the there-ness of there? In my body near my diaphragm. I'm applying interpretations, if I don't apply the interpretations and I am looking at your face something is there, something is there and it's in the same sphere. So in dzogchen tradition they talk of *tigle* or *nyag chigpo*. *Tigle* means drop or ball it symbolises emptiness because it has no corner or edges and *nyag chigpo* means just the one. There is just one ball.

So in this moment we have a *tigle* in a sense because I am focusing in you there is clarity on you, your body the person sitting in front of you the people just immediately there there's a clarity and everything else with the peripheral vision is a little vague, it's like colours and shapes with lesser definition. So that's like a ball of light with little rainbows spreading out from it and if I turn my head away from you now I'm looking over here you are now moved from the centre of the *tigle* today's of light coming out from the side. And this is what is happening all the time. In psychology they talk about the figural the ground and so on but essentially what is figural takes on a vitality which is in that moment my existence. This *tigle* of experience is happening all the

time. And it's always surrounded by these rays and these rays represent the potential of the situation because with very little effort by turning my head, the potential which was there becomes central. And the potential which is revealed in the periphery now becomes central and this is the movement which is going on all the time. In this our body is part of the tangle just about most of the time unless our attention is really externally focused.

So experiencing the arising and passing of thisness which is immediate meaning this is intrinsic value this is what is called 'as is' that-ness, suchness, there are many words that we have for this, it's just here. What is it? Then again we're at the crossroads it's this. Or we give the interpretation. And because we are so addicted to the interpretation as soon as we give the interpretation we tend to lose the 'as is' If you only have the 'as is' you can't have the interpretation. A lot of light inside by-but outside looks like an idiot. So what we want is 'as is' and speaking, but the speaking that doesn't forget the 'as is'. This is the integration of samsara and nirvana. So the body as a dynamic experience is what is ever all the time but it is our own conceptualisation our investing of the body with fears, trauma's, medical treatments, going to the dentist and so on, fighting people at school, memories of maybe having good sex with someone and breaking up, there are all sorts of trace memories which exist and can be found in the body. Are they definitional? Well they are if we make them definitional, we can make the story of ourselves the thing itself but then we should lose the thing itself because you're caught up only in the paradigm of semiotics narrative analysis. Or we hold to the immediacy and see these thoughts hovering around like yesterday we were looking at them in terms of dakinis flying in the air. So you have the immediacy and the memories are fluttering around. If you allow one of these butterflies to land it's beautiful colours will show you something for a while maybe some joy, maybe some fear, then they flutter off again and they are gone. What remains is always the immediacy. So I think that is how one can approach the body.

Question organ donation

Question: Is there a Buddhist opinion of donating one's organs after death?

James: What is compassion? Is it a sacrifice? What does sacrifice mean? In European tradition the prime story for this is Abraham and Abraham hears the voice of God telling him to sacrifice his son, so he takes his son for a walk in the country and gets some wood and in his little pocket he has a knife and then he puts his son down on the rock and prepares to cut his throat. And luckily God comes and says something new, but the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son is the mark of formation of the one true God in the development of the middle eastern religions, the formation of Yaqui Way as the guarantor of truth and value and ethics, therefore obeying God is more important than obeying ordinary family loyalties and so on, it's a particular marker. You sacrifice your life in the world for God. Then down the generation we have Easter and the sacrifice of Jesus, which again marks something incredible. So here it's not just Abraham as a human being saying the family my blood alliance is less important than God, here we have God saying 'I will sacrifice my son for the sake of human beings.'

Now what you see in these movements is the economics of the gift. Whenever you give a gift it sets up a debt, this is a major theme in modern European philosophy coming from Marcel Mauss who wrote that throughout the world cultures bind themselves together through lending, borrowing, through gift giving. For example if there are rival groups and you want to establish peace you can do it by exchanging women and marrying in. For example the first Buddhist King of Tibet took a wife from Nepal and a wife from China and that way made political alliances. So the idea that you give something in order to get something is very strong.

So we talk of organ donation, you carry your donor card - 'I am going to give my heart.' Well actually you're not going to give your heart since you can't actually do that. Someone else will take your out heart.

In England during the Victorian period there was a great fear of people being buried alive. And so it was normal to put a little bell in the coffins so that if somebody woke up before they were buried they could ring a bell. That was also the time of gothic novels and the story of Frankenstein so it wasn't surprising that fear would be there. But how do you know when somebody has died?

From the Buddhist point of view the gradual exiting of the body is very difficult to determine from outside, how long that takes, and when it's done, of course the body is now just a dead body and it may be too late for organ donation.

So here again you have a crossroads, either you have a clear good death or someone else has a life. Will I sacrifice the quality of my death for someone else's life? This is an unnatural decision; this is the kind of decision, the kind of ethical quandary that arises due to technology. You wouldn't have had that in Tibet because when somebody's died the only question is do you throw the body away, do you burn it, do you put it in a cave, because there are certain rules. If somebody dies say with smallpox you don't burn it, they find a particular rock face with holes in and they put them in. You can see in Ladakh near Hemis Gumpa a whole hill face which is like that. Or you can chop them up and invite the vultures and they come and eat the body. But the body is something to be disposed of.

In some cultures of course, head-hunting cultures you kill your enemy you cut off their head eat their brains and in that way you can have their strength. Or you eat their heart something which is practiced quite often in east Africa. But, in a hospital situation somebody wants something which is inside your body and you are now in a state that you can't say no. This is very tricky. How do you know if somebody feels something or not? Now again you can carry out operations on the baby in the womb, you can carry out operations just after the baby is born, but they are now able to do these particular operations and there is a whole question - does the foetus feel something? Well you can't really give anaesthesia into the foetus very easily and how on earth would you work out what sort of level. You get all kind of technical issues in which people have to assume lack of sentience that there is no sensation.

Question about what to do after a death

Question: What to do or what not to do after the person has already died? Is there something we can do to help people who have died recently or what not to do lest we irritate them?

James: One of the notions of a lama is to be able to help somebody have a better rebirth. How do you do that? You have to direct their mind. So you have to find their mind, so there are special trainings that you can do to do that. Of course again you are interfering with something because as we were looking yesterday it then becomes a kind of dialogic thing, like somebody's dead and your whispering instruction in their ear because Tibetans believe the hearing is the last sense to go. So the person's lying there they are not moving, they may seem to be dead, to continue to say mantras in their ear, some prayers that they might be familiar with and that could give them a re-centring and that might be a useful thing to do. You would need to know which mantra's the person said, so if it's somebody you don't know what are you going to do? If you say something they have never heard before that's probably not very helpful, if you imagine that they were able to hear.

From the point of view of dzogchen the most important thing is to enter into the state of openness which has no boundary between it and so in that state of openness the other person has as much access to openness as possible. If you stay in your thoughts about them you stay in a conceptual bubble in which you are thinking about their situation and then your thinking what to do to them, for them, that's a state of busyness especially when they're going into the first stage of the bardo where everything is just very open, being open with them in that openness means there is no contradiction between their experience and the experience in the {02:44} field around them. So I think that's the most important thing to do.

Comment: And giving away possessions of this person, one should wait or maybe because I don't know if the deceased person can see what is going on. Because in some texts you can read that they can see and have some clear - see what is going in and maybe I think maybe I do something that's irritating to them.

James: Funeral services tend to have this double move, like it says in the *Simply Being* book, in the first chapter Chetsangpa describes how people gather round and they feel very sad but because they also have a feasts there is also the sound of chomping as people chew on meat and glugging as they drink some alcohol. People are chatting and the main thing they are saying is: 'We're alive and poor John is dead. That's so sad, but anyway here we are, still alive!' Every funeral has that tension isn't it? People start telling jokes and they drink a little more whisky, maybe more than usual, because they are trying to say that there is a difference between life and death. So staying with the dead, that's quite difficult.

Again if you look in an anthropological way at a big funeral in Tibetan system it's a moment where wealth is transferred because you bring in fifty a hundred lamas, you have to feed them, give them gifts, they do a lot of chanting this increases the status of your family in the culture.

And you get a lot of merit so you are seen to be very good. So there are many, many agendas going on in these situations.

But for meditators simply being open, freeing the mind from thoughts about, because the main instruction is don't think about the past, don't think about the future, stay completely in the present. So remembering someone, having love for them, holding them close, thinking about 'Oh I remember when we used to go walking in the forest together in the autumn. We always looked for the mushrooms, so gorgeous.' You think you're making a connection with the person but what you're doing is connecting with your memories about the person. The person himself is not having thoughts like that, or if they are that's pretty bad news.

So if you really want to connect with the person in the state they are in better remember that their world has dissolved right down and gone. If you have a friend who has unfortunately gone to hospital and they have had a terrible accident and they've had their arms cut off, and you go into see them and say, "hello" {James gestures reaching his hands out to shake their hand} that's not very nice. You have to remember that the person has no hands - out your hand in your pocket. So now this person is dead, you can't speak to them as if they are a living person - they're dead, dead. You have to relate to them as a dead person, that is to say, all the memories that they have of their life should not be reactivated that's really unhelpful. The system is closing down into a state of space just be in space with the person. Then experiences will arise for them, these experiences are arising in space. If you follow the account in the Tibetan *Bardo Thodrol* tradition – the so called 'book of the dead'. The term *thodrol* means liberation by hearing in the bardo. So it means hear these instructions, primarily hear them out of yourself through your meditation not just in through your ear. But if you follow these when these out of this great open emptiness the forms start to arise, gods and goddesses, they are the manifestation of space. The person's tendency is probably to grasp at them as something strongly real, that's not helpful because then you either go into attraction or aversion neither of which will help because if you run towards the gods, they are like rainbows in the sky, you'll never catch them.

So they need to recognise that these are the illusory forms and just be open to them, just as you would in meditation. So again if you are with the person sit in openness; space is the best thing of all, it's out of space that all these appearances are arising.

It is helpful to advise people not to chatter near the dying person or the corpse. Of course people may become anxious and distressed but if they get upset or unhappy or want to talk then they should go out of the room and do it somewhere else and when they feel calm come back in. Just be very peaceful.

Comment: What about touch?

James: Laying out the body is already touching the body. You should just leave the person for some hours without interfering at all and do very minimal kind of intervention. When people are prepared for funerals and they go to the funeral parlour, and they do many different things, and

they stitch up the lips and they out on make-up and so on. This is very very strange, this is a very strange thing to do. It's really an insult to the person, they think it looks nice and given that many families now don't even want to see the corpse. Certainly in Britain funeral parlour less and less of these laying out, it used to be very normal people would come and sit and of course in the old days they would do it in the house. They would put up some boards on two chairs and the person would just sit there and the person would sit in the circle and they might do rosaries and so on. But interfering is not so good. Because that's about us we want to make the person to look nice for us. The person is dead. They are not coming back this is now just the five elements which will gradually disintegrate. And of course being there and seeing the fluids leaking out, we really see 'Oh this is gone' there is a separation and this takes us into the great mystery - 'what is life? And what is death? '

So in the materialist notion when you have the successful movement of the sperm up through the vagina towards the uterus and you get successful fertilisation that's enough - that's enough. From the Buddhist point of view it's not enough, there you have the basis, male and female basis coming together but the consciousness is coming from somewhere else. So there is a non-material basis. Body is like a kind of room that you live in, it's a kind of house. In the Hindu tradition they say 'at death we change our body the way a brahmin changes his shirt every day.'

One life to another

What is it that moves from one life to another? There are many different kinds of descriptions of this. Why is it that we take our karma with us but not our memories? Well, karma is not a cognition, karma is a more subtle trace it's like a tendency which is prior to manifestation, whereas memories, knowledge, language, knowledge of mathematics and so on these exist as manifestations, the manifestations all dissolve but the basic potential continues. So as we touched on earlier the five sense consciousnesses are dissolving into the mental consciousness so you are losing the capacity to see and hear and so on. You go into the internal world of thinking, the mental consciousness is fused with the consciousness of the afflictions so people can often have disturbing thoughts and then these two consciousness dissolve into the ground consciousness which is called the alaya consciousness {01:36 - Tibetan} which is the base or subtle potential form which is itself empty. But it is this very subtle form which moves from one life to another and it then manifests according to causes and conditions.

So it's as if this was, now you can get these things that you can put on a hut in the garden or on the roof of your house, you get a big pile of a kind of specially prepared soil and you stick it in the roof and then the rain comes and gradually the seeds start to sprout and you get different flowers coming up on your door. You must have seen these kind of things? So these are things like that, according to the season of the year the amount of rainfall, sunlight, some little seed starts to sprout. So inside this ground potential consciousness there are many, many possibilities, and these possibilities are evoked by various things. One is the power of intention from a previous life, the organisation intensity of focus of your habitual organisation. So if somebody is primarily concerned to get a lot of alcohol down their throat, that's a strong

intention. Or to watch as many football matches as possible, or to have sex with as many people as possible, or to eat a lot, or to say a lot of prayers, or to help all sentient beings. These are orienting intentions.

So if you take the bodhisattva vow every day and you really think about it and when you meet people you think, 'may you be happy, may you be well, may all your problems dissolve' if that is a continuous quiet voice running in yourself, you have made an incredible intention or orientation to have a situation where something useful can arise. And if you have devoted your life to seeking oblivion or seeking the destruction of others that's also a strong orientation.

So in the bardo after you have this quiet period then the various peaceful and wrathful gods arise then you enter into the bardo of becoming in which the body, the echo body or the shadow body of your previous life starts to fall away. So when you awaken from this first bardo of actuality the idea is when you encounter these various gods and goddesses you have a kind of shadow or trace body that is roughly in the form of your previous life. Which means that you are reacting to them with some kind of familiarity about how you would normally react to them. But as that period ends and you go unconscious again that body then dissolves and you start to have the beginnings of the phantom body of your next life {05:07} which is already bringing with it a orientation of what is going on. So it says in the traditional texts if your going to be born as a human being, you see a couple having sex and drawn towards this activity, drawn towards the intensity of the genital movement, if you feel desire for the penis you are likely to be born in a female body, if you feel desire for the vagina you are likely to be born in a male body. This is before equal opportunities. So it doesn't say anything about if your going to be gay or lesbian or transsexual. You have this orientation and this is very important because if you were going to be born as a snail, human sexual organ is not particularly interesting, you'll be looking around are there any leaves. So what would be arising as the very different possibilities of rebirth, it's not that something is imposed on you but you are already drawn towards something by your own impulses. Just abs when you go shopping you're drawn towards buying something that is blue or red or green according to your favourite colour. You always wear that colour. There are many other things in the shop - 'not for me' - they are in the shop cause someone is going to buy them but it's not you, it's not your choice it's not your orientation, it's not your habit and so that's a sense of what's happening at that point.

So again, if you want to help the person, the best thing is to be very peaceful because towards the end of their journey agitation is going to arise having space that is grounding is good. It's like if you have a small baby, your a new mum and the baby starts to cry, 'Oh what will I do, what will I do?' and if the mother gets agitated the baby gets more agitated because the mother is the energetic field around the baby. So the mother has to learn to be calm even though it doesn't know the heel of what's it's doing in relation to the baby. Then the baby will become calm. So in that situation if you are with a dead person, you are like the mother, holding it and if there is agitation arising 'it's ok, ok, ok, ahhhh' because once you are calm you see more and you have more choices. Once we get excited were much more likely to go into a habitual orientation.

Question about the nature of mind

Question: We are wondering about two terms we know from Namkhai Norbu, a little bit different in your description. As I understood you, you say the mind is the open space with awareness and then there is another layer which is the ego and the mental activity and yes, I know the expressions mind and nature of mind where the mind actually is the mental activities, so is it just that you use it in a different way or that I got it wrong?

James: Yes well, these things are - the mind and the nature of the mind are the same. There is no difference at all between them because from the very beginning there has been no duality. But for we poor creatures wandering in samsara there's a very big difference. The difference exists for us because we see a difference, for those who recognise the nature there is no difference.

But to the technical questions about vocabulary - in the Tibetan language they have a wonderful, wonderful vocabulary for this. So you have *sem* as the word for mind and *sem* can be ordinary mind or it can be a very high thing. So *sem* and *sem nyid* - *sem nyid* is like the {1:34} nature of the mind and *sem* could be ordinary conceptualisation but when you say *sem* it could be high or it could be low, it depends on the text you're reading. So, if you call all the mental operations the mind, or mental activity or mentation, but you could say it's the mind, this activity of the mind in its business can be forgetful of its own ground and so liberation requires it to recognise its own ground. But in its own business it resists recognising its own ground.

So the mind is like a teenager and the teenager is living with the parents and is using the house as a hotel. It says I come in when I want, I go out when I want, I eat what I want, I sleep when I want - fuck off and leave me alone - get out of my room. And the parents thinking, I'm paying for this, you don't remember any of things ever I have done for you, you're wearing the clothes that I brought, when you want to go out and see your girlfriend, I'm the one who is giving you money to take her out. And you call me a pain in the arse, you call me somebody who doesn't understand anything. But we have to be patient. So the nature of the mind is like the parent - here you are you are living in my house and the mind is running around going, no I don't I'm myself. And when the teenager hopefully goes through more developmental process they finally become capable of some degree of gratitude and then they are able to say, "hey yes its nice living here thanks a lot." So essentially it's about growing up as this turbulent energy settles into its own ground. But yes they are slightly different vocabularies.

Question about perceptual spaces

Question: So this metaphor of minds, of awareness as space, at the visual space of, of visual perception but its, there's the sensation of the body, does not fit in this picture of visual space.

James: Well Tibetans have a word for appearance, *nangwa*, which also means light. *Nangwa* indicates whatever is appearing to any of the senses. The literature is very visually focused, just as European literature is, if you read novels, you get a lot more accounts of what people see than

the quality of what they hear. You might get some dialogue but you don't get on tonal variation in a thrushes song or something. Very unlikely. So we are visually dominant creatures and so a lot of the metaphors use that, so when a sensation arises in the body we say, we've already located the space of the arising, we've wrapped it in a name and given it a location that my body is here your body is there. When you relax the interpretation there is an emergence something. It could be the emergence of a colour, a taste, a sound, without working out where it is, what it means, staying with the immediacy of it - it arises and passes in a space and after it goes there is an open space just like if you throw a pebble in a stream, the ripples spread out and gradually the centre calms down and the ripples are still moving further out. {2:20}

So the point where that particular experience rose then become quiescent so if you do this body scan, this time you feel something in your right shoulder, something quite intense, and when you come back there there's nothing there. It's as if the pebbles gone - its calm again. So this is like a space there's nothing there. It's a space within which something could happen. It's not really a geometrical space we're not thinking of multiple dimensions, a kind of metaphor for an arena for which something could happen. It's not two-dimensional, three-dimensional, we're not putting a kind of locational thing on it. Everything which occurs is in the space opened up by death. This space is referred to in Tibetan as *zablong*. *Long* means space or particularly expanse and *zab* means depth. So it's like the - we go out the door and the whole sky is immediately available to us. Now you can think I am looking out of my eye, light is coming from the sun, its mediated through these white clouds, therefore the trees look like that today - there's a whole explanation. But the immediacy of the experience is that everything is here. So it's that kind of space. In European language we don't really have a vocabulary for that, so every time we use a word we're likely to surround that word with our usual expectations and assumptions which makes it difficult.

Love

So now we come to the end of our brief time together. We have been talking a lot with particular focus and whenever we have one focus there are some things are not made so explicit. One of the words we have not used very much this time is love. The basis for all this practice is love, in the Tibetan sense love means, may all sentient beings be happy. That is what it means, an open heartedness which includes the welfare of all beings and this is implicit in relaxing and opening the mind. When there is no division between ourselves and our own ground, ourselves and other people and our perception of other people as being separated from their ground, then this universal integration becomes possible and the fulfilment of peoples buddha nature is the highest quality of love. We can love people and want to be close to them, but this is love mixed with attachment. We can love our children and want them to be happy and successful but this also involves a kind of specialisation a particularisation and attachment. The idea may all beings be happy, whether we call them friends or enemies, whether we like them or we don't like them, this causes us to keep dissolving the barriers inside ourselves the mental structures that make artificial distinctions. So every time we do the practice and open

this is the space or the sphere within which all existence is present, without bias, without prejudice and this is the essence of love.

Refuge, bodhicitta and dedication of merit prayers – in Tibetan.