

ANXIETY AWARENESS EASE

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Anxiety is pervasive and so normal that it is almost invisible. We tend to experience it consciously when we feel its impact on our body, our voice, and our mind.

None of us know when we're going to die and yet we can't live without making plans. All the ideas that we have of our future may well come to nothing.

All the books that you read on psychology, all the exams that you take, all the hopes that you might have of enjoying a good career—these ideas may be blown away like leaves in the autumn wind. Death may arrive without warning. The day you get your final diploma you might celebrate with a little wine and fall down the stairs....

Our existence is underpinned by anxiety, yet its presence is often ignored. The fact of death is a deep source of anxiety which remains hidden by our extension of ourselves into our imagined tomorrow. Our commitment to our plans for the future supports our fantasy that we can fulfil our hopes and dreams. We wish the freedom to do as we please and have an anxious need to know and do everything. Due to this we ignore the signs warning us of serious, if not mortal, danger.

For example, although western culture is now largely focussed on the future it is still influenced by the myth we inhabit a fallen world. One version of this myth indicates that in the Garden of Eden there was no anxiety. Anxiety developed due to the breach of the prohibition God gave to Adam and Eve: *"You can do whatever you like except one thing..."* And of course that one thing, eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, became so very tempting!

This is similar to the story of Bluebeard. When he marries yet another young woman he says, *"You can go everywhere in the castle, wherever you would like to, except for this one room."* But this forbidden place becomes more and more attractive in her mind as anxiety about restriction agitates her. She needs to act in order to find out yet when she opens the door she finds...death.

These are two examples of the unsettling anxiety arising from the need to know. At this moment societies the world over are conflicted about whether the anxieties arising from climate change should be denied and ignored or acted on. Either option is full of difficulty and the main choice is between delayed and intensified disaster or facing a plethora of problems demanding material and psychological resources that we may well find we lack. These anxieties arise from our being forced to know what we would rather not know. Similar anxieties arise from knowledge of the past acts of colonialism, slavery, genocide and contemptuous disregard for the value of others.

Rules and prohibitions give shape to our lives yet also thwart our desire for freedom: freedom to know, to speak, to act. If you follow the rules you'll be okay so don't try to look outside the frame. Outside our social frame lies death, unimaginable death, the great disruptor of our fantasy of self-knowledge and the will to power. Day by day we encounter facts that stab at our assumptions, especially our assumption that we are good kind people. Many western countries developed their economies on the basis of exploiting others. Many of these economies continue to be engaged in the export of weapons, of bombs, landmines and military drones that we know are used to harm the defenceless. The tension between troublesome facts and reassuring fictions is difficult to sustain. If self-thriving is based on self-deception then the repressed but ever-returning anxiety of being in bad faith is never far away. Egoic power rests on the freedom to impose rules on others while breaking them oneself.

There are many kinds of anxiety. For example there is situational anxiety arising when events beyond our control impinge on our plans. As an example, we may find ourselves caught in a traffic jam and so are becoming late for a meeting. This is uncomfortable, we're not certain what will happen and we don't want to let people down or have them think badly of us. This kind of anxiety usually does not linger long, vanishing as the situation changes—as long as we have the capacity to let the anxiety vanish with the event. If you go outside in the rain you get a bit wet but when you come inside you dry out and it is as though you never were wet. Life flows easily when we accept our own fluctuations - wet/dry, relaxed/tense. happy/sad - and don't make one polarity more valid than another.

Psychotherapy can help patients learn how to release situational anxiety so that it does not accumulate and energise itself by predicting future difficulties. For this we need to distinguish between event arousal where we mobilise towards the actual situation and act on it, and ideational arousal where we mobilise on the basis of an idea. In the first case the event has a beginning, middle and end and so does its associated anxious arousal. In the second case arousal can easily continue for a long time as its focus is an idea and ideas can linger and insist whatever the actual context.

Habitual anxiety develops with our tendency to worry about our ideas of situations and to explore them again and again. There is no end to worry for it is an anxiety-maintenance procedure dressed as a problem-solving procedure. Worry generates a sense that the world is not very safe: *'I can't trust the transport system', 'I can't trust my own plans.'* We can become over-vigilant, looking for new instances of the difficulties and dangers we assume to be global.

With this orientation we often adopt worry as a means of trying to predict problems and solve them in advance. Worrying can feel useful and creative, both practical and efficient. Unfortunately worry tends to lead us further and further into the forest of our anxious speculation.

Most problems in life are quite simple. You sit with a piece of paper and write down the various options, think them through, and then make your decision. But if you start to worry, you pick up one possibility and run around with it then put it down and pick up another and then another. This creates a huge amount of

turbulent movement in mind and body without producing clarity and effective action.

The concrete problems in our life are linked to the space and time that we inhabit – something has to be done, usually in a particular way and by a particular time. However worry floats free of the concrete and is often increased by the necessity of making an actual decision. Instead of the decision being the end of the matter, worry allows us to be anxious before, during, and after the decision is made.

ANXIETY AND IDENTITY

Although anxiety is clearly an embodied experience expressing itself through our postures, gestures, facial expression, breathing, skin tension, tone of voice, rapidity of speech, semantic content and so on, it tends to dislocate our embodied self from its actual environment. This deprives the anxious person of the grounding available through attending to the precise details of how they actually are.

Even with seemingly external material factors which easily arouse anxiety and worry, such as poverty, sickness, violence, war and climate catastrophe, the anxiety often lifts us into a mental realm where concrete solutions are hard to establish. Hierarchical cultures tend to offer less choice and freewill to those at the bottom. Restricted by limited education and the stereotyping whereby one is seen primarily in terms of ascribed group membership, the seeming givenness of the structure easily feeds feelings of hopelessness and apathy. Lack of entitlement to citizenship, healthcare, reasonably paid work all thin the sense of self necessary for the ongoing struggle to find a viable niche in this uncertain world. Some degree of control over how our social identity is formed is necessary for our ego-self to maintain the illusion of predictable stability. The more others can impose an identity on us the more limited are our opportunities to influence the patterns of social signifiers which impact so profoundly on our sense of self and our place in the world.

Yet even when we are able to focus on our embodied presence it can be difficult to gain a sense of stable identity. Our body as it actually is exists only in this moment in time and in this specific location, and yet in states of anxiety we go off into the imagined past, future, and present travelling with our currently imagined identity. The human capacity for imagination is enormous. We imagine that we have definite reliable knowledge about ourselves, others and the world around us. However our capacity to avail ourselves of this knowledge and use it effectively is inflected by our moods of hope, fear, joy, anxiety and so on. Moreover such moods often operate outwith our consciousness. They suffuse us and seem, at least for a while, to be part and parcel of who we are, and so when our perceptions and interpretations of events are mediated by such moods we can still believe that we are accessing the world as it actually is. Such commitment to the seeming truth of our interpretation alienates us from our being in the world in the immediacy of our ongoing interactions. This projection of our fleeting ideas and wishes is so convincing for us that the actuality of phenomena scarcely impinges.

For example patients with dysmorphophobia can formulate their fixed belief about something being wrong with their appearance in terms of being too tall, being too thin, having the wrong shape of ears and so on. With this definite

knowledge the person then approaches the world with the certainty that other people also see and are completely fixated on these details of this problematic appearance. This definite knowledge becomes their principle interpretive schema as they pay selective attention to factors in the phenomenological field and use this distorted perception as evidence to confirm their hypothesis. Thus somebody might believe: *'People do not like me because of the way I look. I try to make friends but people turn away from me.'* It is then difficult for them to see that the actual reason people turn away is that self-preoccupation makes you unavailable for contact.

However we need to remember that there can be certain secondary gains with this kind of narrow fixation. The unpredictable flux of daily life gives rise to many reasons to be uncertain and tentative and this can lead to a diffuse pervasive anxiety. But if one can settle on a key focus of concern this allows a crystal to form out of the solution, a crystal with a definite shape that the solution lacks. Romantic love, nationalistic fervour, obsessing about a hobby like rock-climbing—such fixations can also provide relief from general anxiety even although they are usually accompanied by further fears.

Such habitual anxieties are often maintained by our effort to manage the fluctuations of our own central identity while acknowledging that other people are free to interpret us according to their own schemas.

I will never know what you think. Why? Not just because you might be very polite and not like to say...but because you cannot say what you think. None of us can say what we think for as soon as we speak we are already describing the past. The situation described and our thoughts about it have passed. Language cannot catch the moment, it merely plays with echoes. New thoughts are already appearing. The immediate is uncatchable. We think about and talk about representations of the already absent.

This is why you can be in therapy for many years and never resolve your issues. For example, in one session you may describe something about yourself that seems to be true. But then the following week you go back to therapy and say, *"Well I was thinking about it some more...and it's not quite like that..."* There is always more to say about our sense of our elusive ever-changing self.

Questioning the basis of your own identity can be interesting or troubling depending on circumstances. Moreover both options feel different from having your identity questioned by someone else: *'Are you valid, legitimate? Do you have a right to be here? To belong here? Do you have a right to exist at all?'* This kind of questioning, implying or clearly stating a lack of acceptance, welcome and inclusion is likely to increase many aspects of anxiety. If how I look is taken by you as a sign that I don't belong then how can I shift your belief which is grounded in your sense of being normal and entitled? If you are the normal one expressing the truth of how it is then your belief *de facto* makes me abnormal and less than you. Moreover if your view is backed up by the state, the police, religion and so on then you, the definer, are forever safe on the inside and I, the defined, am the uncertain outsider with only my anxiety for company.

THE ILLUSION OF SELF

We are unstable – feelings shift and change. Being interactive creatures, relational beings, we are constantly influenced by what happens around us... and 'influence' is about fluency...it's about flowing. We are swimming in the river of life with other people. In fact we are like little currents flowing in the great river of life. We are not standing on solid ground and yet we are required to make solid statements about ourselves. We are required to present ourselves into the world as something that is reliable—that we are stable: twenty-four hours a day, fifty-two weeks of the year. *"I am stable, I know who I am, you can trust me!"*

We are not a fixed entity that can be known. This is a simple truth that should not be turned into a problem. Our evaluations of who and how we are are easily altered by our situationally variable capacity to participate in what is going on. We are co-emergent with circumstances. Moreover we do not know what other people make of us and if we ruminate about the many possible attitudes they might have about us then we are likely to further unravel our own sense of ourselves. Given this unpredictability it is not surprising that for some people it can seem safer to fixate on their own self-defined problem and use it as a consistent focus of their tendency to worry.

To be a social being able to survive in the world requires the capacity to maintain a persona, a mask, a presentational self behind which we can hide the messiness of our fragile fleeting actual selfing. Our constructed persona floats on the surface of our life like a little bubble. The waves, tides and storms of our moods shift and turn, their momentary forms often ignored as we struggle to keep our bubble of seeming self-entity intact. Sometimes we are expansive, sometimes we contract. Sometimes we are hopeful, sometimes not. Sometimes our minds are clear and sometimes there is a lot of confusion.

In fact our experience is ceaseless fluctuation: our body is full of sensations coming and going, and our thoughts and feelings are always changing.

As we attend to this ceaseless movement it becomes clear that the narrative of our social persona, so effortful to maintain, is a cover-up, a deception, a lie. The stories we tell about ourselves are indeed just stories, mere fictions. Actually who we are is not something which *can* be known because fundamentally we are part of a field of revelation diversely unfolding. We are not like the bud of a flower gradually opening to display the fulfilment of its potential. It's not that we have some essence inside us, some deep defining core-identity which gradually emerges to show itself in the world. Rather we are co-emergent with circumstances. Free of fixed defining essence we are participants in an interactive matrix of collaborative responsivity. My sense of having and being a fixed self is a delusion. The fundamental root of our anxiety is our mistaken belief in a personal individual self-identity. If I am 'me' and belong to 'me' I should be able to define myself as the one I want to be and be able to live on my own terms. So much suffering arises when these deceptive notions become axiomatic, unexamined and determinative. Trying to maintain a self-structure that is founded on false propositions is a thankless task, an ongoing struggle to maintain a fantasy that is being exposed as groundless by the transient actuality of our experience.

UNGRASPABLE PRESENCE

The truth of this actuality, its very source, is beautiful, deep, and unchanging. This is the essence of how we are. Yet believing that we are a who and a what, someone named, knowable and known, we unintentionally hide the ungraspable yet livable truth of the openness of being. Being is the presence of the intrinsic absence of something-ness. All seeming 'some-things' are actually devoid of inherent existence. They are no-thing, no-entity and are empty of self-defining essence. Now this might sound like a cause of anxiety but in fact it is the truth that dissolves the basis of all anxiety. As the sun dispels the morning mist so the clarity spreading from true pure perception causes the delusion of individual substance to vanish. With no one to grasp and no-thing to grasp at there is relaxation, freedom and bright presence.

We can now start to look at the buddhist view of dzogchen, the great completion, which points out the non-dual integral actuality which is the truth of all the complexity, confusion and anxiety we encounter. We have a mind. This mind is not a thing. It is ungraspable. Yet it is present as clear presence which illuminates its own open ground as well as all our transient experience. The empty open infinite ungraspability, the bright illuminating ungraspability and the ceaselessly self-arising and self-vanishing relational ungraspability are the three inseparable aspects of the truth of life and the heart of the buddha.

To see the ground of our being is to see that there is nothing that can be seen. This ground or source or basis is not an object of knowledge. It is not something other than its illuminating awareness. This non-duality is open, empty and ungraspable. To 'see' this is to be freed from the need for hungry looking for what we need in order to be complete. We are already part of the whole. We are complete—not in 'ourselves' as something deemed to be separate but in our inalienable participation in the never-dividing, never-fragmenting whole. The whole is for ever empty and it is for ever full. To open to the presence of the empty ground is, paradoxically, to be with the fullness of instant occurrence. Moreover, the clarity of receiving the instant presence of the showing of the potential of the whole does not establish a fixed observer position. We are not clear due to looking but by receiving the showing of the ground. Moreover this showing includes our experience of ourselves which is in fact simply movement within it. All that we do and say is the playful non-dual display of the ground source.

STILLNESS AND MOVEMENT ARE NON-DUAL

The open aspect is still and unchanging while the other two aspects, illuminating display and relational patterning, are modes of movement. Stillness and movement are not the same and yet they are not truly different. They are non-dual. Non-duality indicates that actuality is neither just one thing nor many different things. For example, if you look into a mirror, you see a reflection. You don't see the mirror. It's impossible to see the mirror as 'mirror'. The mirror shows itself by showing something which it is not, i.e. the reflection. The mirror is the capacity to show something which it is not and yet which of course it also is. When you look in the mirror the mirror is filled with your reflection. The mirror does not stand in relation to the reflection in it. You can't take the reflection out of the mirror. They are neither two nor one—they are non-dual.

To take another example, we wear clothes. We can take our clothes off, since our clothes are, in a sense, an ornamentation added to our body. They are not the same as the body, but when we wear our clothes we inhabit our clothes and it's as if they are an expression of ourselves. Yet at night we take off our clothes. Body and clothes are dual, not non-dual. However we can't take the reflection out of the mirror. The reflection does not clothe the mirror. The reflection and the mirror are not two things. The reflection is the showing of the quality of the mirror. The mirror is empty of self, of fixed content. It is the emptiness of the mirror which is the basis of its infinite generosity, its capacity to let the other arise as self within it, while remaining free of both self and other. The mirror shows the reflection of whatever is placed in front of it without prejudice. If you put something very horrible in front of the mirror, it shows that, and if you put something very beautiful, it shows that. If you turn the mirror away from something beautiful towards something ugly, the mirror doesn't sigh, it doesn't get sad, it doesn't have a temper tantrum; it just shows what is there. The mirror itself is still and unchanging as potential. The reflection is an aspect of movement whereby a specific pattern of potential is momentarily revealed.

THE SOURCE HAS NO PREFERENCE

This might seem very wonderful – yet then the question arises: *"If this is true, if this is how it is and how I am, how come I didn't know it?"* The ground or source of everything, and that includes us, is ever open, ever fresh. It gives rise to both clarity and confusion. Neither is 'real'. They are not things, or states, or essences but modes of revealing aspects of the potential of the empty ungraspable ground. They are illusion, appearances without individual defining essence. To see this within non-duality is clarity. To be blind to this due to the miasma of duality is delusion. The truth of non-duality is beyond the capacity of language and concept to depict accurately. Therefore what I say now is an offering of images, representations of the unsayable, the ungraspable. Hopefully it is illuminative—but it needs to be held lightly.

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF IGNORING THE SOURCE

Confusion arises from the open ungraspable source as a magical illusion displaying the sudden deluding sense of the existence of something which can be grasped. The flow of non-dual appearance continues like the flow of reflections in the side-view mirror on a car. Yet suddenly within it there seems to be something. Moreover for that something to be known there is necessarily an apprehendor of the 'something'. In the dzogchen tradition this is known as 'One Self ignoring', (*bDag-Nyid gCig Pu'i Ma Rig Pa*), the ignoring which is the sole entity, the first autonomous thing. The One Self is itself the ignoring of the ground, its ground. It is (in its falsity) by denying what it is (in its actuality). It is in fact an unborn empty moment of imagination, of delusion, of falsity, of invention, yet in its seeming truth, it 'is'. Holding on to this moment as an indicator of something generates our sense of an entity enduring through time. In fact time is born with it.

What is it that continues? A fiction, an illusion like a rainbow—yet as an over-invested reified illusion it is deluding and so a chain of falsity comes into apparent 'existence.' This is/I am—these are creative concepts operating like a magician creating the illusion of something out of nothing. And yet when they are taken to be descriptions of something, the fleeting phenomena and the stabilizing

concept become as one. This fabrication, this lie, this deceptive theatre, is the basis of existential anxiety. There is a belief in something which does not exist. It is only the power of belief that generates the seeming existence of that which does not exist. The familiar binary of fact and fiction arises when fact is not accurately seen as a mode of fiction. All is fiction, imagining, believing. This is the father, the activity of taking the flow of empty appearances, the children of the open empty mother, to be the presence of entities for ever separate and multiplying.

The ground source is open and empty, and awareness of the ground is free of being something as such. The actual ungraspable is light, bright, fine, precise, intrinsically valid without requiring dualistic validation. This has not vanished. It is unchanging. Although clarity and delusion arise together as the play of the open ground, now this play is taken as the existence of diverse somethings. This is known as 'co-emergent ignoring' (*IHan Cig sKyes Pa'i Ma Rig Pa*). The open source offers everything including its closure which is delusion, concept and solidification. These are mere empty reflections in the mirror, but now the mirror and its reflections seem separate. They are co-present, 'born together', yet, seemingly, clarity is dulling due to the patina of the perception of 'things' superimposed on the openness of empty appearances.

This thickening is an accumulation (*'Du Byed*) of memories, associations, constructs which further veil the ever-open ground from which they are inseparable. It is as if the ground is something other than what appears and that this appearance veils the ground from the observing self which is other than it. Self and appearance are the display of the ground, a display that is blind to what it is a display of. The seeming entities that stand apart from the ground are like formations of ice appearing from water but being taken as other than water.

This thickening is reinforced by conceptual patterning as each momentary formation of the open potential is seized hold of as a 'something' and identified by its membership of a system of naming and classification. The immediacy of fresh appearance is dulled by being taken, for example, as an instance of a 'tree' which is then further refined as an 'oak tree', and then as a 'young oak tree with spring leaves'. By now the ground is fully ignored in its openness (*Ka Dag*) while its fullness (*IHun Grub*) is mistakenly taken to be the presence of nameable, knowable stuff. This is called the 'naming everything ignoring' (*Kun Tu brTags Pa'i Ma Rig Pa*). Now perception is no longer simple and pure but is bewildering in its fixation on endless entities. This strengthens the developing ego identity: I see stuff. The seeming 'reality' of stuff as separate entities confirms my 'existence' as the separate entity I know as 'I, me, myself'. Yet, since appearance is inherently empty of substance, the mistaken belief in the real existence of self and other, of me and everything I find myself in contact with, generates further deep anxiety. I am having to reinvent myself moment by moment, identifying myself with a stream of rising and vanishing experiences: I am tired, I am thirsty, I am walking... How I am emerges with circumstances yet I am burdened with the deluded and deluding ongoing activity of asserting my enduring substantial predictable essential existence.

From this arises our experience of inhabiting a body in samsara, the turning wheel of becoming. Having been born we find ourselves to be a fish, a bird, a woman, a man, a some-being some-where. Our environment arises for us as a

series of options or choice points. We have to react or respond to the shifting situations we find ourselves within. Each time we choose an option and act we establish tendencies, patterns, habit formations in our egoic self-reflexive mind-stream. Believing ourselves to be real and inherently separate from our environment, we seek to gain what we want and avoid what we don't want. But assessing another person for their potential to make us happy over time is very difficult. We change, they change—and what once seemed hopeful and viable starts to seem limiting, frustrating and unappealing. We shift from desire, to boredom, to anger. As the Buddha said, suffering arises from getting what we don't want and not getting what we do want. What is actually in front of us and what we take it to be are often rather different. This is the experience of 'obliviousness to karmic cause and effect ignoring' (*Las rGyu 'Bras La rMongs Pa'i Ma Rig Pa*). Our actions have consequences beyond their immediate effect, for the patterning of what we experience is dynamic and unfolds through the intention and intensity of our participation. Our life is our own habitual patterning being revealed through our behaviour yet we do not recognise it and this dullness adds another layer to our ignoring.

This is the dullness (*gTi-Mug*) of not getting it, of not knowing what is going on. It brings the anxiety of playing catch-up, of trying to join the dots and see the whole picture. Dullness is blind assumption. Sometimes it is defensively confident in the narcissistic style of dictators and sometimes the underlying anxiety is more evident, arising as confusion, fear, mistakes, self-doubt and incomprehension. This dullness supports the narrow view that forms our own life. By not looking, not seeing, not feeling, not knowing what is occurring as history and as present activity in the world our prejudices remain invisible to us and we are party to exploitation and disregard for the actual complexity of interdependence.

Each of these four aspects of ignoring what is actual brings their own flavours of anxiety, uncertainty and hesitancy. The anxiety of believing the false proposition of the reality of existence leads to the anxiety of denying the intrinsic open ground and turning to the artifice of imagining self and other to be entities. Our imposter-self, which is a non-self, is taking the wrong way. We, this hollow self-image know this but we don't turn back. We travel on apart from the flow, seeking to become someone. We are in bad faith with our potential yet we choose to continue to live a lie. From this we find ourselves, our emergent selves, engaged in the work of conceptual elaboration as we seek to control and direct the patterning of self and other in this seemingly fragmented world. The cause of this fragmentation is our own mental process, but since we are committed to our idea of the autonomy of self and its isolation from objects we cannot see this. Hence we have to keep acting on the world 'out there' to make it conform to our wishes and to the shifting patterns of our hopes and fears 'in here'.

With this we exist as ego-selves in a world of different species of ego-selves. Some we dominate and domesticate, some we live in fear of. We act to optimize the welfare of ourselves and perhaps those we love. We have our own hierarchy of values and this informs our choices and organises our planning. Act, react, act again. Life is ceaseless activity. There is so much to be done and so much of this seems necessary if not important. When we hear of the buddhist teaching that everything is empty of inherent existence it sounds like nonsense. Life is real, life is hard, you've got to stay ahead of the game. If you don't take opportunities and

threats seriously and strive for your own welfare you may not survive let alone thrive. This anxious need to be busy colours our days: tidy the house, please other people, be a good partner or parent—it never ends. And so we are entrained in karma, in activity and are too busy, too tired, too preoccupied to attend to the open spaciousness within which we live.

EFFORTLESS SELF-LIBERATION

We do not need to remove the habit of ignoring. It is not something bad that we have like a disease. It is a mode of participation based on identification with ideas. Our mind itself does not rest on ideas. Our ego-self does rest on ideas. Our mind itself is not improved by 'good' ideas nor harmed by 'bad' ideas. Involvement is effortful, although due to habituation this effort may be invisible to us. Awareness is free of effort. Appearance&experience arises effortlessly moment by moment as the unborn showing of the radiant potential of the ground. Like an illusion, like a mirage it arises without a doer or a maker. It is not done or made or compounded, it is effortlessly arising ('object side') instant presence ('subject side') non-dual, unborn, devoid of inherent existence.

Staying present with this, as this, the falsity of ignorance is apparent. It is a mistaken identity which vanishes when its baselessness becomes clear. Ignoring is self-clearing, self-vanishing, self-liberating when ego-self is not indulged and so takes its place as part of the flow. Then, with all illusory obscurations released into the flow, all entities are transparent and awareness shines forth.

Habits have their power through repetition. What is required is that we attend to the freshness of the moment. Its instant presence is an aspect of the ground. Rather than my body being a thing apart that I have to control I can open to seeing how it is moving and from that come to see that moving is what I unnecessarily conceptualise as 'my body'. Moving is moving—just this. It is inexpressible in its immediacy. To talk of 'movement' is already to set out a particular kind of some-thing. This is why we need meditation as a moment in which the four aspects of ignoring can be allowed to vanish. They are held in place and operationally activated by the dualising mental activity we identify with as being ourselves. Therefore we simply sit and let experience come as it comes and go as it goes. Non-involvement and non-interference allows our habitual arousal to relax as flow, revealing its actual openness which is intrinsic. As our reliance on concepts diminishes we find ourselves less preoccupied and thereby free to enjoy the innate spaciousness. of our source.

ATTEND TO HOW YOU ARE

However before we can access the intrinsic we need to start to recognise the dualistic artifice we habitually identify with. At first it helps if we can see that our bodies are always moving in space. Even if you're sitting very still, your body is moving; if it wasn't moving, you'd be dead. Breath is going in and out of your lungs. This involves shifts in the diaphragm, shifts in the nostrils, and if you touch your pulse, you can feel your artery going up and down according to the pulsation that is going through it. This 'body' is itself ceaseless change.

When we are small, we often want to be big; when we are big, we don't want to get old; when we are old, we don't want to die. No-one can stop the movement of time and this brings both dissatisfaction and anxiety. The body is the pulse of

time. The body is rhythmic, the rhythm of breathing, the rhythm of the heart, the rhythm of all the hormonal cycles and so on. The person I refer to as 'me' is movement. 'I' am moving, arising and vanishing moment by moment: pattern after pattern of presence free of enduring substance. Generally this goes unnoticed as I try to stabilize myself as something, to formulate my identity so that I can reliably present myself as always being the same. However, as we looked earlier, this is a lie, a fabrication, a self-deception of and by the selfless self. Ignorance is the fictional creator of fictions. Imagination generates a world that does not exist yet so seductive is this illusion that we believe it to be real. It seems obvious and undeniable that 'it exists'. Yet both 'it' and 'exists' are imagined. They are transient ideas fossilized by belief. What we take to be the self arises from deception and is itself self-deceiving and other-deceiving.

The most reliable thing about anyone is that stories can be told about them. The stories form a kind of cocoon disguising the ceaseless change that occurs within. Yet even the telling of the story is sound moving due to the throat moving. We cannot truly be caught by a story for we are movement and cannot be nailed down except by a lie. Saliva forms in the mouth, irritation forms on the skin when an insect bites, our knees hurt so we stretch and turn and move around. Posture, gesture, gait are all inseparable from specific environments. Our body is not a fixed thing but it is part of the ongoing conversation that is our 'existence', an existence that does not truly exist, being nothing other than the flow of experience of the non-duality of self and other.

The body is movement, feelings are movement, sensations revealed through proprioception are movement, thoughts are movement, memories are movement, plans and intentions are movement. Like rainbows, like clouds, like birds flying across the sky, events are arising and passing moment by moment. None of us can stop time. The good things we want to keep, vanish. Moreover the bad things we want to get rid of will also vanish. We don't even have to struggle to get rid of them.

The fundamental point is this: to look clearly and honestly at your life and your world and see that all that you are is constituted from movement. When this becomes clear to you you see how ludicrous it is to spend your whole life trying to stop movement. All through your life rhythms have been playing around you and whether your life goes well or not generally depends on whether you can dance to these many different rhythms. For example, when you go to school, you have the playground and you have the classroom. These environments have different rhythms. Some children are very at home playing in the playground, but then when they come into the classroom, they want to continue playing. The teacher says, *"No, sit still, listen, write, do what you have to do!"* But the child feels, *"I can't hear this tune, the music I want is in the playground....so sweet....I want to dance"*. People who can only hear one tune get a lot of trouble because in all situations they just hear the same tune, their tune, and so they clash with the music of where they are.

Health, both mental and physical, is the capacity to bring forth from the vast repertoire of one's own rhythms the specific rhythm which will fit with the rhythm of this arena of the world at this moment. We have the potential for this, we have the capacity, so what is it that gets in the way of our manifesting according to circumstances? Generally it is because we limit ourselves by the fixed beliefs we

hold about ourselves. We see how other people live, but we think, oh, I couldn't do that. We see the clothes they wear, but we think, I could never wear that! We hear the things they say and we say, "*Oh, I couldn't say that!*" I couldn't wear that or say that because I am me. Being me means yes to a few things, and no to many, many, many other things. These other things are done by people with two legs, two arms, two eyes, one nose! Now we check ourselves... two legs, two arms, two eyes, one nose! Okay so I am almost the same. Maybe I can change. I am going to try this, but oh, I am not so sure. This doesn't feel like me...

I start to feel anxious, how can I let myself become someone who I don't believe I am? This is my problem, how will 'I' do it? Well 'I' won't be able to do it, because I have already defined 'I' as somebody who doesn't do it. If you want to be free you have to let go of being the you that you know yourself to be. From this perspective knowing who you are is bad news. When somebody is dead we can write their obituary, we can sum up their life, but as long as we are alive, we don't know how we are going to feel or what we are going to do. One morning you wake up and there is a new tune in the air. Often it is a tune of spontaneity you have not heard since you were a caterpillar in your youth. Now after years in the cocoon the butterfly is ready to take off. The cocoon can't fly. So let's hope the butterfly is free of the cocoon and happy to be a butterfly—then flying is easy.

How does this happen? In a moment of self-forgetfulness we arise anew. I am not who I thought I was. I think I'm this, I think I'm that, I'm being like this, I'm being like that. How I am thinking and how I am being are changing in their 'how-ness', in how they emerge. Unfortunately this is easily disregarded by my commitment to my whatness, to my being an enduring someone. This self-reflexive, self-defining fixed motif has maintained the illusion of my predictable self. However, suddenly, for some unknown reason, I might find myself doing something else and being someone else. This doesn't fit my existing image of myself, so I am at a choice point: either I go with the new and fresh or else strive to be more of the same.

FRESH OR FAMILIAR

Psychotherapy can help to bring about such moments of decision. If the therapist can be a warm supportive presence free of agenda then they are not of themselves reinforcing the patient's belief system. Of course the patient's perception of the therapist is mediated by their assumptions and tendencies and they often transfer patterns from the past in to their felt sense of who the therapist actually is. When this transference or projected image of the other dissolves there can be a moment of freshness in which one sees the other as other rather than as a creation of one's own self-confirmatory patterning. In freeing the other from our interpretation we also have the chance to free ourselves—at least momentarily. A therapist's training should help to free them from their stale knowledge of who they take themselves to be. This can create an ambience which supports the patient to simply show how they are rather than to identify themselves as someone already known.

Moments like these bring us to a choice point. We can either step into the fresh and see how it is, or step back and try to reconstitute ourself as the person we know ourself to be. Breakdown to breakthrough, to open up, to open out, witnessing the self-vanishing of the props that kept the old story starring on the

stage in the drama of 'my life', or breakdown with a frightening sense of groundlessness, a collapsing of structures of self into bewildering not-knowing generating an anxious need to pull oneself back together again. To choose the former is to start to experience a profound deconstruction of the fantasy that you are who you thought you were. To choose the latter is to re-engage with the endless task of self-construction accompanied by the pretense that you truly exist as a reliable entity.

When you look at a musical score you see notes written on paper. If you are a musician, when you see the notation of a phrase you know what to do with your fingers. Each time this pattern comes on the score you make a particular sound. The same notes occur again and again. However the sound of these notes is heard as part of a movement of sound and the notes that are before and after this particular instance of the sound create the context in which the 'same' sound is different due to the difference of context. Our life is like this. We play the notation of ourselves again and again yet according to the context it has different resonances. We are manifesting as a transient formation in a transient field of disclosure: here for a moment and then gone. That is to say, neither ourselves nor our environment are a fixed territory which can be secured. To live this is to experience that the musician and the music are fresh and fully revealed in each moment.

When the carapace of knowledge falls away it reveals the fresh tender skin that is so alive, sensitive and responsive. The fixed rhythm of our habitual moves is replaced by an ever-expanding variety of moves, of moods—a co-emerging polyphony without end. Instead of a self struggling to keep to its own rhythm and not be led astray by other people's tunes we find that events are calling us forth and as we freely respond we get closer to the source of the response. As self dissolves our ungraspable bright awareness shines forth like the rising sun.

FANTASIES INVITE BETRAYAL

So now we can perhaps gain a clearer sense of what anxiety is. Anxiety is the feeling tone of trying to make stable something which cannot be made stable. There is no 'something' to get hold of and control, not then, not now, not ever. For example, people often get anxious in a relationship: "*I want you to love me but I feel you don't love me anymore. I don't know what to do.*" Love is very unreliable. In the old days people had arranged marriages because they understood very clearly marriage is about land and cows and children! Keep the heart out of it. Most of us don't have any land, we don't have any cows, and though we might want to have children, the basis for having them is a hope rather than a fact: "*I love you, and I will love you forever.*" I know who is going to win the football championship because I can tell the future! So I can say with full confidence, "*I will love you forever.*" "*Oh thank God, I have been waiting for this, because I am going to love you forever too!*" Isn't it beautiful? Well, in England the divorce rate is now over 50%. Feelings are not very reliable, as we know.

When you are a child and Christmas is coming, you see lots of adverts on the television for cheap plastic toys made to look wonderful. The child is convinced by the advert that the toy they want will be exactly the same as in the advert. Then Christmas comes, they get the toy but after a week they don't want to play with it because it is not the same as in the advert. It is not what they thought it would be.

The excited hopeful feeling that the child felt on imagining what they would get could not be fully replicated with the actual toy. The magic was gone. Where did it go to? Back into the potential of the mind. All the qualities of all the objects and all the people in the world are the qualities of the mind. If you have faith then dying for you your country can seem glorious. If you have faith then torturing the enemies of the state can seem noble and patriotic. If you have faith then this particular person is the most beautiful and wonderful person in the world. Looking through the eyes of loyalty or love you see a truth that is hidden from others. Rational, sceptical eyes cannot see this beguiling bright inspiration radiance.

One of the reasons that our identity as human beings is so unreliable is because we are enthusiastic. 'Enthusiasm' indicates that the *theos*, the god, comes into us. Similarly 'inspiration' indicates that the spirit comes into us. That is to say some divine or ungrounded presence fills us and in this merging we imagine that we taste the truth. But spirit, like the breath, is coming and going, here and then gone. The divine cannot be caught, the breath cannot be caught, life cannot be caught, love cannot be caught. These are not commodities to be traded, for there are no commodities only delusions.

A mood takes us over for a while, and then it's gone. Afterwards we cannot imagine how we could have been caught up in that story. *"How could I ever have fallen in love with someone like that? I see them so clearly now. I don't know what happened to me. When I first met him all my friends said, uh uh, not for you....but I knew in my heart that I was right. Oh, how stupid, how wrong I was, I'll never make that mistake again."* It's like that, we are unreliable and others are unreliable too. Why? Because we are movement like the wind. We shift so quickly for there is nothing stable in the personality.

IMAGE LEADS US ASTRAY

However this ceaseless unpredictable movement does not condemn us to chaos. The ground or basis of movement is stillness. Stillness is the actuality of our awareness. If I have a mirror in my hand and I turn it around to display the room, as the mirror moves many different reflections arise and pass. The mirror itself is not changing. The mirror's quality is to be open to what is there. The potential of this openness never changes. No matter what arises in the mirror the potential of the mirror to show reflections is not marked or limited. Now, if you take a blank piece of paper, it too has a lot of potential. At this stage you can draw or write anything on this piece of paper. However, once you start putting marks on the paper the infinite potential of the blank piece of paper is lost. The potential of the paper is vulnerable to circumstances. Once marked it cannot unmarked.

Although our unborn awareness is like the mirror, our personality is like paper, taking on mark after mark until its open potential is fully obscured. As we develop through life we become what we take to be 'ourselves'. When we were small, we could do and become many many different things. But by the age of twenty our life is starting to take shape. This shape is not actually authentic yet its repertoire of familiar patternings comes to feel like me and gives some density to my existence. Moreover in the minds of the people around me some shape or representation of who they take me to be is also being formed. They become used to their sense of me according to their habitual interpretations. They think that I

am a set of particular knowable patterns. If that is not confirmed by my current behaviour they may ask, *"Hey James, are you okay? You look a bit different."* They are letting me know that they need me to be who they think I am. So as a personality, as an identity, the James-ness of James is held in place by factors not all of which belong to 'James' as he takes himself to be. There is a social obligation to be reliably oneself: my 'self' is not mine! This demand is very restrictive and does not allow much room for happenstance and this also can be a cause of much anxiety.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SENSE OF I

When we are managing our identity, examining options, making choices, trying to increase happiness and reduce suffering for ourselves and for those dear to us, we are employing the aspect of mental functioning known as consciousness. Consciousness is dualistic; it takes an object, it focuses on something both apprehendable and comprehensible. The operation of our consciousness leads to our saying things such as, *"I like apples more than pears."* This statement rests on the identification of apples as objects different from pears as objects. This is followed by comparing and contrasting and the allocation of status in a personal hierarchy of value. A lot of quick and often habitual mental activity lies behind the simplest of statements. The more precisely we define and identify objects in the world, the more precisely we can identify objects in ourselves—memories, plans, regrets and so on. Our developed subjectivity brings a highly selective attention towards the rich variety of entities displayed in the ever-changing field of dualistic disclosure.

For example, I see people in this room, I hear the sound of someone talking next to me as they translate what I have said, I taste the traces of my lunch in my mouth. In each case I am experiencing specific 'somethings'. Subject and object are arising together. In experiencing the object, there is a reflexive sense of me, myself, confirming that I am the experiencer, I am the one to whom this is occurring. If in active mode, I am the one who is making this happen. However this 'I' has no true independent inherent existence. 'I' is an empty signifier. In a limited dualistic way 'I' is like a mirror, because it can take on any content. Actually it is more like a sausage skin since you can stuff anything into it! I am happy, I am sad, I am thirsty, I need to have a pee—anything can be referred to in terms of 'I' because I is empty. The value of the signifier 'I' for me is that by using it I can claim many identities and experiences as 'mine'. I am thirsty. True. Now I drink. I am not thirsty. That means a statement such as 'I am thirsty' is a lie in absolute terms since I am only thirsty in relative terms subject to the play of causes and conditions. *"You said you were thirsty. I gave you something to drink. Now you are not thirsty. Now you don't want anything to drink. Why should I believe anything you say! Last night you told me you were tired now in the morning you say you are not tired! You're just like a puppet, something pulls your strings and you do this, you do that."* This indicates the dynamic interdependence of self and other, subject and object, subject and subject.

This is us: this is our life. We fabricate a story of stability and apply it to 'something' which is completely unstable. So who is the one who says I? To employ the term 'I' as referring to 'myself' is to use it to organise 'my' experience or rather to organise experience so that I can take it as mine. 'I' is not referring to something deep inside 'me'; it is not a personal essence, but a signifier working in

the world in myriad transient formations. I can be fused with my experience: so if I'm tired, I'm just tired. I can also be conscious about saying I'm tired. So I might say, '*I'm tired*' and then start to think, but why am I tired? In that case the second thought has the first thought as its object. I'm thinking about thinking, and each thought appears like the subject when I speak it as it or think it as it, but it then appears as the object for the next thought. This is consciousness functioning as the interweaving of our self and our world as we take them to be.

There is no autonomous self, no stand-alone individual represented by the term 'I'. I am because you are. I alone has no past or present or future. I alone has no content nor is it a container: the sausage-skin of self does not exist as something that could hold true content. The idea of I operates as both a reference point and as an 'owner'. The felt sense that an experience is mine installs the idea of self as something apart, something possessing the functions of owning and doing. Yet both subject and object are part of the flow: they show and go in their specificity. Only in abstraction do they endure as seemingly eternal ideas far from the actual. However, as presence I alone is the dawning of awareness, open, empty, naked, available yet ungraspable. Open empty I is nothing at all – even if you look again and again you will find no personal essence underpinning it. It has no owner and it does not own. Yet it is also the basis of all that can occur, it is the immediacy of potential revealed as the diverse richness of this moment. Moreover, here I am, present in this, as this, of this – yet without being truly a someone somewhere. I am this apparitional play, this *fata morgana*, this undeniably ungraspable mirage.

It is sometimes possible to make this insight central to our work in psychotherapy. For example, it might be appropriate to help some of our patients to be more mindful of the way in which they formulate their fantasy of an enduring self with enduring characteristics. It might be a great relief for them to see how they themselves restrict themselves and deny themselves access to their intuitive spontaneity. If we are to help someone else open to their potential we firstly have to open to our own ground. When we observe how we identify with a pattern and how this becomes the moment of self-creation we can see the cloud of self forming out of the open sky. This is not a matter of abstract speculation or the imposition of an interpretation.

We need to focus on the concrete and be present with phenomena as they arise and pass in their ungraspability. For example, at the moment I am moving as I am speaking. I am conscious of this and I am also aware of the field of experience within which the event and my consciousness of it are occurring. Dualistically I can catch what I am doing, I can define it and I can tell you what I am experiencing—this is the work of consciousness. Yet in the immediacy of this occurrence, consciousness and its objects are both revealed as empty reflections in the mirror of awareness. There is panoramic seeing without a seer doing the seeing. This is awareness or presence. I am not observing myself but rather awareness reveals without observing. Awareness is never an object. It is not aware of itself but is present as itself although it has no self to be present as. I am the non-revealing revealer free of bias and intention. I am open: all this and just 'me' in this moment. Awareness is not subjective agency but the luminous field within which subject and object show as self-arising self-vanishing display. This is a tricky area on the edge of language since the word 'I' can be used to refer to my

conscious individual self or to my unborn open awareness. They are different and yet not intrinsically so since neither exists as an entity.

If we were practising ballet, at least one wall of the room would be mirrored and we would be observing our bodies in different postures. We would be working with the fact that our proprioception is often inaccurate and misleading. That is to say, I may believe that I have a clean balanced line, but when I look in the mirror I can see that my right shoulder is too high and the extension of my arm is crooked. In this case observing myself helps me to correct my fantasy about myself.

Similarly when people are learning yoga they need to have someone to help them again and again achieve a balanced position because the somatic memory, the kinesthetic memory, is often inaccurate in terms of actual posture. We experience movements of thought, of feeling, of sensation arising as pattern after pattern. Some patterns we say are perfect, some we say are off balance. This is the evaluative judgement of consciousness working with learned criteria and it may well frequently be inaccurate.

However in the moment when I am simply present with myself in the unfolding of the becoming of this instant of 'myself', I am not apart from myself observing myself, but neither am I merged in it or identified with it. Awareness is non-dual with whatever occurs, just as the reflection is in the mirror and the mirror is showing the reflection it offers hospitality to. This is a generous selfless hospitality free of bias to either subject or object. Each aspect of the field is welcome as it is and free to come and go.

This hospitality is a key quality of awareness as described in the dzogchen tradition. Awareness is not an energetic formation; it is not transient or situationally altered. It does not arise due to causes and conditions although what it shows arises due to causes and conditions. The mirror and the reflection are non-dual, awareness and occurrence are non-dual. Just as the space of the mirror instantly shows what is there without having to build up the reflection, awareness effortlessly shows what is occurring. Nonetheless the patterns which are revealed can be seen in the relative terms of historical causes—and of course this is the more familiar arena of psychotherapy where our focus is on the work of consciousness rather than on the play of awareness.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

If both therapist and client can be present in open awareness this can greatly facilitate the work of psychotherapy. In particular as therapists, if we relax into the intrinsic clarity of simple presence before a therapy session, our availability is no longer a limited capacity of our ego-self, a capacity that is easily influenced by events in our own lives. The hospitality of intrinsic clarity is effortless and unrestricted and as such does not interfere with the revelation of the patient as they are. Many of us are used to effort, to artifice, to intentional interventions and perhaps to formal diagnoses and treatment planning. We may feel we have to do something, to engage in a process of enquiry, perhaps of analysis, and most probably of change. This orientation keeps us in duality, burdened by what we take to be our tasks and responsibilities. However being caught up in a professional identity may be another veil to the open space of co-emergence.

Therefore avoiding both wary self-doubt and hubristic over-confidence we could lighten up, relax and trust non-duality.

The mind is very subtle, you can't catch it: you have to learn to be with it in its non-duality. So it's important to develop an appreciation of how you are which is subtle, graceful and non-restrictive.

When someone presents with anxiety or depression, it can be helpful to consider them as patterns of energy, patterns of experience. The more the patient fuses with the experience and takes it to be indicative of who they are, the more difficult it is to help them. Although to say, 'I have depression' is less dense than to say, 'I am depressed', both these statements can feel like the truth of the patient, their limit and definition, and therefore something to be taken seriously and honoured. However, on the basis of what we have explored so far together we might relax and hear such statements in a less reificatory way.

The patient says, *"I am really depressed, I can't do anything. I feel terrible."* We need to hear the intensity of this as rhythm, as energy. The insistence present in the semantics, in the tone, in the physicality of expression, are all conveying how the energy flow of the person is compromised. The life energy, the prana moving in the subtle channels, is trapped in fixed sections where it vibrates in limiting and intoxicating ways. This trapped vibration with its repetitive beat is reinforcing the sense that this is the truth about me and is my permanent state of affairs.

"I feel terrible. Dum dum dum. I feel terrible, terrible, terrible, de de da. I feel terrible, please pity me, da de da de da." This is a tune, a vibration in space and time, an expression of energy. It feels like me, yet not recognising this self-validating feeling as a vibration I take it as a consolidating definition of myself: *"I am depressed. Listen to me. Get off my back. Why do you keep asking me to do things? I'm really depressed, just leave me alone. This is me, I'm at my limit."* Suicide often occurs as the depression lifts giving the person the energy to act. They often feel so fused with the experience that for them it is the absolute truth and limit of their existence. This is all there is and there is no way out. Depression becomes essentialised as the core definition of what and who they are. However, the actuality is that every moment of depression is a second-by-second manifesting event. It is the arising and passing of experience in space and time. The seeming permanence lies in the conceptual interpretation and not in the actual phenomena.

If this experience is happening to me, for me, as me, who is the one who feels, 'I am me'? If we can see through our mesmerising self-perpetuating narrative and look directly at what is occurring then we see movement not stasis. The surface of our ego-self is like blotting paper. It is very absorbent and what is absorbed fuses with the paper. However awareness is like the mirror. The mirror shows the image right inside itself without any barrier yet not being absorbent, it remains fresh, open and unaltered. The awareness-mirror is never conditioned by experience. The ego-self is always conditioned by experience. Thinking about something is the ego's activity, its principal way of resourcing itself. However you can't think your way out of severe depression and you can't think your way into awareness. The door to awareness is meditation and in particular the meditation of non-meditation in which we simply open to the transient presence of whatever is occurring. The needy ego-self is never free of hopes and fears and this keeps it

primed for involvement. Non-meditation begins when we cease to identify with the ego-self nexus and remain empty and open with the self-arising/self-vanishing display.

The prime function of this approach to meditation is to release us from our biased identification with aspects of appearance. With this we cease to feed ego formation. Ordinarily we register that something is occurring. It impacts us and we react with identification or disidentification and some qualities of this involved reactivity are absorbed by the ego. Our sense of self is altered by these adaptations of expansion or contraction.

In particular, we can carry the impact of trauma in our body. For example, the impact of a fear-inducing event on the sympathetic nervous system can establish an unhelpfully high level of adrenaline as normal. This feeds an ongoing hyper-vigilance and hyper-arousal. With this comes a selective attention directed towards potential problems and provocations in the environment. Through this we subtly re-traumatise ourselves by our fearful separative stance and so maintain the high level of adrenaline we are used to. This is activity generating a fabricated and unnecessary sense of enduring identity. If this dualistic activity of anxious observation were not on-going the adrenaline level would go down opening up new arenas of experience and identity,

When the effects of an experience are incorporated as an aspect of my sense of self, this fusion makes it difficult to separate from and let go of what has been incorporated. As we looked earlier, the ego-self is like a sausage skin—it can fill with joy, with pain, with hope, with regret—and that filling can then be taken to be an essential ingredient of our identity.

Our identification with our ego-self as being who we really are is the reificatory basis upon which we are bound into an attachment to patterns as indicators of defining essence rather than as transient phenomena.

Intentionally focussed meditation can help to develop our capacity for mindful attention. This can then be utilized to observe the patterns of ego formation maintained by the selective inclusion and exclusion of factors from the field. From this we can see that the ego is not the enemy, being merely a self-perpetuating nexus of energy devoid of inherent existence. The key task is simply to recognise that what we call 'ourselves' is a patterning of energy and not an enduring substance that can sustain an accurate definition of 'who I am'. It is actually a patterning of my communication with the world, a patterning that has become habitual and limiting.

Seeing that 'our' ego is a reading of our organisation of our energy of connectivity with others, we can start to recognise that change is continuous. The meditation of non-meditation free of intention and agenda reveals that there are no fixed entities to be altered or got rid of, rather both self and others are rippling patterns in the ever-changing flow. The experiences that occur in therapy can be helpful for gaining a direct taste of this. Therapy lets us see what gets in the way of our opening to the other and to the wider potential of ourselves. Whether we see this foreclosure in terms of transference and counter-transference or in terms of interruptions to contact our aim is to open wider and deeper pathways of connectivity. Neurosis is self-enclosure, an echo chamber where preoccupation

with pre-formations blocks attention to the immediate and the actual. When we spend our life inside ourselves going round and round in the labyrinth of our mind trying to work out who we are and what we should do with our life, we are following a tragic path of lostness. Other people are not who we think they are, so if we want to relate to other people, first of all we have to open to them, receive them and try to be with them as they present, moment by moment.

Revelation of occurrence free of interpretations and projections that impute inherent existence is freely available—we have merely to avail ourselves of it. By being present as part of the unfolding field of experience we have optimal access to the dynamic presence of the other. We start to receive how they show—simple, direct, immediate. Then our response arises as part of the non-dual display in harmony with the potential of this moment. To be silent or to speak, to be still or to offer energetic engagement—our non-dual presence will intuitively, spontaneously, display as transient patterning within the bright ungraspable field. Trusting the simplicity of this frees us from spending a lot of time in our skulls trying to work life out.

WISDOM

Life is dynamic and interconnected and is intrinsically beyond being something that could be captured by a theory or a set of principles. Presence is present with each moment. So where and how are we? Here and open, or locked inside 'ourselves'? The ego is finite in its capacity to receive the world—it gets shaped and overwhelmed and then cuts off. But awareness has no limit – it just lets experience flow through. To be present as awareness is not something esoteric, it is the actual ground of the phenomenological richness of our life. The whole is undivided and reveals itself all at once. Just turn your head and look around the room. As you turn your head new aspects reveal themselves instantly, completely, moment by moment by moment. Thusness, thisness is immediately here, self-revealing its ungraspable display of which we are always already a part. Life is not a problem to be solved by thinking—you do not have to work it out, and in fact you can't. Life is revealed fully through participative immersion and not by grasping at fabricated 'facts'.

When we practise we sit in a relaxed way, breathing in and out. We are here, aware and simultaneously part of the experience that is occurring. We meditate with our eyes open without separating outside and inside. We are not trying to achieve something. Our presence is simple and without agenda and by resting in it, as it, we are the unchanging welcome that is non-dual with whatever occurs. The occurring is the showing of the unchanging—it is not other than its own open empty ground or source or basis. How can it be this simple? It just is. So why have I been trying so hard to sort myself out? You have been deluded by the myth of separation: you have taken the real existence of yourself for granted and starting from that assumption, which is shared by all the beings you encounter, you have created your own factory. This factory makes work for other factories. Each of us works away sorting out the constructs that we encounter and in that activity we create further constructs for others to sort through. Psychotherapy can offer a space in which to see the vapidness of the veil of ontology and let it fade and vanish. Or it can be an arena in which the veils are multiplied and thickened, where we work hard to make sense of what has happened and its consequences for how we are. This investigation of cause and effect is located within the

paradigm of duality: *'This happened to me. I did this.'* Then therapy is just another factory producing stories about life, stories which veil the actuality of life from this life-moment which I am.

Whatever occurs, however it seems, is actually self-vanishing experience—direct, clear, just this. None the less if you conceptualise it and enter into judgement about it then self and other will be taken as inherently existing and you will inhabit the troubling delusion that the whole can be fragmented—indeed that the great all-inclusive whole is just another idea and that each fragment is its own autonomous whole.

Experience is the display of the breath of awareness. Yet if it is not seen in its non-dual integrity it appears to be split into experiencer and experience, subject and object. By simply sitting with the undivided field, awareness, although inherently free, is released from our habitual over-layering and revealed as empty of defining self-content. We are present, open, aware, yet uninvolved.

This level of availability can be very helpful for psychotherapists because when you are sitting in this way with a patient you don't divide the field. This ambience can help the patient to deactivate their tendency to anxious defensive splitting. In this non-dual field of experience everything is happening together. Now free floating attention and free association occur simultaneously. The pulsation of speaking and listening, receiving and responding, is like the flow of waves in the ocean. The field is 'healing' itself of imposed divisions and so communication becomes unimpeded. Presence does not rest on anything and so is free of need. It is not improved by happy experiences nor is it diminished by troublesome experiences. It is with them but not involved and not affected. By staying with what arises now, and not identifying with the subject polarity, subject and object are seamless in their co-emergence and are evidently non-dual with their open empty ground. The temptation to separate off from the open ground and to identify with the ego consciousness will continue for as long as this temptation is taken to be real and powerful. Yet by relaxing all tension in body, voice and mind limiting fixations are unharnessed and are free to arise and vanish. We are not applying an effortful technique but are simply releasing the energy bound up in our habitual striving. With this the therapist is the presence of the integrity of the three inseparable aspects: open and empty; instant and diverse; and this precise patterning of the energy of collaboration.

This offers a deconstructive generous availability, welcoming the patient as they are with a spaciousness that helps to ease them out of the fixity of their over-determined identity. The patient's story will tend to entangle us and pull us towards our theories. However the patient's presence, fully attended to and openly received, will allow the free-flow of non-artificial connectivity.

This is the prime factor in healing. It is not so complicated. Yet the social organisation of training and validation tends to introduce distracting complications as trainees are required to show that they have developed the capacity to think about the patient and the interpersonal skill required for upholding a professional identity. Yet, paradoxically, most of what we have learned while training as therapists and perhaps now employ in our work is not truly helpful because the deep and vast work is done by self-forgetfulness, by becoming a simple availability free of agenda. The plasticity of the field is the

potential out of which both therapist and patient can emerge offering each other the non-dual welcome we have all been seeking even if we did not know what we were looking for.

This is something we can experience for ourselves. When you go home, you can find some music you hate and put it on and dance to it. *"I can't dance to it, I hate it."* Yet you know that other people do dance to it; it is danceable. *"But not by me!"* In that moment the dynamic of how you limit your potential is directly revealed.

NON-MEDITATION

For therapists not to impede the self-healing of the whole they need to let their limits dissolve again and again and again. Our job is to be available for the other as the other needs us, without reifying the patient or their needs. Let the flow flow, sometimes rough, sometimes smooth. Sometimes patients' limits require confronting and sometimes they need sweet acceptance. According to their lived circumstances you might tell them jokes, sing a song, make some drama, or offer some self-disclosure. Availability is freedom from self-restriction and the choreography of expectation. We dissolve the rigidity of our fixed definitions. Not dissolving these patterns of energy into nothing at all but into the bright unformed potential. For example, if you take an ice cube and let it dissolve, the water is freed from its imposed shape and can now be poured into a thousand different shapes. We don't do anything horrible to the ice cube when we let it melt, it is not an act of violence, it's just letting it relax so it can show its myriad possibilities.

This style of meditation as aimless non-meditation avoids all artificiality and employment of techniques such as observing our breath going in and out. It's not about visualising deities or mandalas. It's not about body scanning. These are all methods of working with energy. Here the focus of the practice is to open to openness, the fundamental uncloseable openness of your own being. Because this openness is infinite it has no shape. It is not something other than us which is going to swallow us up. It is the ground of our being, our presence and so we don't have to be afraid. Non-heroic fearlessness is a beautiful quality in therapists. Not to be afraid to make a fool of ourselves for the sake of our patients. Not to be afraid to make mistakes. Our movement is delicate and connected and unharmed. Most importantly, no event is final and reparation is part of life.

Sit in a relaxed way letting your spine carry the weight so that your muscles can relax. Relax into the out breath. Here you are—so don't interrupt your presence. There is nothing more to do.

Who is the one who is sitting? What you take to be your body, your voice and all the various contents of your mind are transient. See how they come and go. I can see that they are not me, yet they are if I identify with them. Relax and avoid the effort of identifying. Avoid the contrivance of doing and making. Simply aware, we find that awareness is simplicity. Life is going on. We do not interfere, neither seeking to improve nor avoid. It is as it is. The still acceptance of this allows a simple seeing free of interpretation and evaluation. We have no list of tasks. We are simply open to and present with whatever is occurring. Whatever happens is the object of meditation. There is no need for control or imposition. Experience is

occurring like a procession of reflections in the mirror. Without making any choices, without adopting or rejecting, allow experiences to arise and pass. The open state of the mirror is neither held apart from experience, nor merged with it. Non-dual integration is free of bias and judgment.

This practice is not something you do, it is not an act of will or intention. It is not about struggling to make a particular something happen. If you find you are distracted and caught up in something, don't worry, relax and release your involved consciousness as part of the flow. With this, you are open with what is here. Relaxing and releasing are not activities you do, rather they occur simultaneously with the dissolving of the tension generated by holding on to something. If you enter into judgement about your experience you will find yourself back in the dualistic state of individual subjectivity. In this meditation we are not trying to learn anything from the experience, but rather we simply open ourselves to the intrinsic clarity which is the luminosity of experience. In our culture we have been encouraged by teachers and parents and so on to try to make sense of what's going on, to find out how things work. This has given us the sense that we have to do something to our experience, as if it were a raw material to be worked on in order to add value to it. From this familiar point of view, to sit and just let the mind be as it is, however it is, without control or involvement may seem like a wasted opportunity.

Cultures, in their honouring of fire, tend to indicate that the cooked is better than the raw. Yet if we always cook everything how will we know what the raw tastes like? Unlikely as it may seem, the buddhist dzogchen teachings indicate that our familiar striving to cook according to approved received recipes is in fact the unnecessary activity that hides the fresh door to liberation from delusion.

Mental activity structured as subject in relation to object creates artificial divisions in the field of experience. By relaxing we find ourselves in wholeness, the unaltered integrity of the three aspects of how we are: unchanging openness, inclusive clarity and self-dissolving participation.

The openness of our mind is like space. This space is the ground or source of everything we experience. If you start with an assumption that your mind is some 'thing' inside your head, it will be very difficult to see the actuality of how you are. If you are out in a park and you see a tree, both the tree which you experience and your experience of the tree are occurring within the bright field of your awareness. Awareness is not a thing. It has no shape or colour, no fixed location. It is not to be found inside or outside and yet is everywhere with everything. Our addiction to concepts leads us to try to define awareness, to nail it down and make it apprehendable. However all this effort cannot catch the mind itself. Rather it catches the ego-self inside the web of imagined entities it seeks to acquire.

Open awareness is ungraspable. Beyond conceptualization it is the ever-present basis of our life. This openness reveals the second aspect, the field of experience, the bright presence of awareness, which is neither inside nor outside. All-inclusive, it is beyond all polarities and dualities. With this as the field we move and live in, there is no anxiety. The most fundamental anxiety arises from duality, from being a self seemingly cut adrift from the field it is actually part of. The individual self is living a fundamental lie. It has no existence separate from the

field of experience yet it claims to have its own autonomous existence. This fraudulent claim, this imposter identity, carries with it a profound anxiety that no amount of technical adjustments can resolve. Only by the ego-self releasing itself from its fantasy of separation and taking its place as part of the whole can this deep anxiety dissolve. The ego-self has never been other than an inalienable part of the whole. One small lie, the self-deluding idea of a separate self, gives rise to an ocean of sorrows. From one brief moment of true clarity the sun of awareness is revealed and its warmth dries out that sad ocean.

The function of meditation is to support us as we continue to relax into openness again and again, relaxing and opening into the openness that is always there. Let life move as it does, without judging or managing events. The judge and manager claim an illusory apartness, whereas our non-dual presence is authentic instant participation free of duality and its consequent burden of accumulations.

So relax and trust the clarity that is inseparable from presence. Then each moment is self-liberating and without residue. If you open to this openness you will find that this clarity rings true and has infinite value compared with the pseudo-clarity generated by analysis of events that have already passed.

Once the ego is seemingly born as an autonomous entity it starts to interpret the richness of the non-dual field as an endless array of entities. Some seem attractive and this provokes desire. Some seem unattractive and this provokes aversion. Then we have the fear, anxiety and suffering of getting what we do not want and of not getting what we do want. This is especially troubling when the object of interest has both pleasing and displeasing aspects. We often attempt defensive splitting so that the good aspects will not be contaminated by the bad. It is this effort that gives employment to the judge and the manager and condemns us as ego-self to engage in a never-ending task of adjustment of self and adjustment of field.

However with this meditation we find our way to letting the mind come as it comes. We simply sit. All kinds of weird experiences occur: fearful thoughts, wild thoughts, self-destructive thoughts, boring thoughts and so on. By offering hospitality to whatever occurs without editing or retaliating our fear of them thins and fades leaving us with the uncontrived confidence that all arisings will vanish by themselves without contaminating our awareness. By keeping our ego-selves out of the driving seat we find ourselves present as awareness that sees all events as the energy display of openness. This reveals our intrinsic freedom to participate free of identification. Now whatever arises can be our ally in our non-dual availability in the service of universal benefit.

Today we have covered a lot of territory. I hope it's of interest to you and I wish you good luck with your studies.

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