

Rupert Spira

The Transparency  
of Things

CONTEMPLATING THE NATURE OF EXPERIENCE

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## FOREWORD

We live in unprecedented times. Science is answering age-old questions about the nature of reality, the birth of the cosmos and the origins of life. We are witnessing technological advances that a century ago would have seemed science fiction, or even magic. And, more alarmingly, we are becoming increasingly aware of the impact our burgeoning growth is having on the planet. Yet along with these rapidly unfolding changes is another development that is passing largely unnoticed. We are in the midst of an unprecedented spiritual renaissance, rediscovering in contemporary terms the timeless wisdom of the ages.

Most spiritual traditions began with an individual having a transforming mystical experience, some profound revelation or inner awakening. It may have come through dedicated spiritual practice, deep devotion, facing a hard challenge or sometimes unbidden, out of the blue – a timeless moment in which personal dramas pale in the light of a deep inner security. However it came, it usually led to a delightful joy in being alive, an unconditional love for all beings, the dissolving of the sense of self and an awareness of oneness with creation.

The profound transformation they experienced caused many such individuals to want to share their discovery and help others have their own awakening. But those who listened to their teachings may have misunderstood some parts, forgot others and perhaps added interpretations of their own. Much like the party game of Chinese whispers, in which a message whispered round a room can end up nothing like the original, as the teaching passed from one person to another, from one culture to another, and was translated from one language to another, it gradually became less and less like the original. The timeless wisdom became increasingly veiled, clothed in the beliefs and values of the society in which it found itself, resulting in a diversity of faiths whose common essence is often hard to detect.

Today, however, we are in the midst of a widespread spiritual renaissance that differs significantly from those of the past. We are no longer limited to the faith of our particular culture; we have access to all the world's wisdom traditions, from the dawn of recorded history to the present day. And the insights of contemporary teachers from around the planet are readily available in books and recordings, and via the Internet. None of this was possible before.

Rather than there being a single leader, many are now experiencing and expounding the perennial philosophy. Some may be more visible than others, and some may have clearer understanding than others, but all are contributing to a growing rediscovery of the timeless wisdom. We are seeing through the apparent differences of the world's faiths, past their various cultural trappings and interpretations, to what lies at their heart. Instead of the truth becoming progressively diluted and veiled as it is passed on, today our discoveries are reinforcing each other. We are collectively homing in on the essential teaching.

As we strip away the layers of accumulated obscurity, the core message not only gets clearer and clearer. It gets simpler and simpler. And the path becomes easier and easier.

At the leading edge of this progressive awakening is what contemporary teachers such as Rupert Spira call the Direct Path. Recognition of our true nature does not need studious reading of spiritual texts, years of meditation practice or deep devotion to a teacher. We need only the willingness to engage in a rigorously honest investigation into the nature of awareness itself – not an intellectual investigation, but a personal investigation into what we truly are.

In *The Transparency of Things*, Rupert Spira not only distils the essence of this inquiry into everyday language; he does so without reference to any metaphysics or esoteric doctrines. He appeals only to our direct experience, encouraging the reader to dive into the personal investigation of what it means to be aware. If you do, you will find yourself tasting the realisation enjoyed by the awakened ones throughout the ages.

Peter Russell  
March 2016

## PREFACE

This book is a collection of contemplations and conversations about the nature of experience. Its only purpose, if it can be said to have any purpose at all, is to look clearly and simply at experience itself.

The conventional formulations of our experience are, in most cases, considered to be so obviously true as to need no further investigation. Here, the opposite is the case. Absolutely nothing is taken for granted, save the conventions of language that enable us to communicate.

From an early age we are encouraged to formulate our experience in ways that seem to express and validate it, and these expressions subsequently condition the way the world appears.

‘David loves Jane’, ‘Tim saw the bus’. Our earliest formulations divide experience into ‘I’ and ‘other’, ‘me’ and ‘the world’, a subject experiencing an object. From that time on, our experience seems to validate these formulations.

However, at a certain stage it begins to dawn on us that these formulations do not *express* our experience, but rather *condition* it.

This book does not address the particular qualities of experience itself. It explores only its fundamental nature. What is this ‘I’? What is this ‘other’, this ‘world’? And what is this ‘experiencing’ that seems to join the two together?

The essential discovery of all the great spiritual traditions is the identity of Consciousness and Reality, the discovery that the fundamental nature of each one of us is identical with the fundamental nature of the universe.

This has been expressed in many different ways: ‘Atman equals Brahman.’ ‘I and my Father are one.’ ‘Nirvana equals Samsara.’ ‘Emptiness is form.’ ‘I am That.’ ‘Consciousness is all.’ ‘There are not two things.’ ‘*Sat chit ananda.*’

Every spiritual tradition has its own means of coming to this understanding, which is not just an intellectual understanding, but rather a Knowingness that is beyond the mind. And within each tradition itself there are as many variations on each approach as there are students.

This book explores what it is that is truly experienced. ‘What is the nature of our experience in this moment?’ is the question that is returned to again and again.

However, this is not a philosophical treatise. It is a collection of contemplations and conversations in which a few core ideas are explored over and over again, each time from a slightly different angle, and for this reason there is an inevitable element of repetition.

In some ways this book is written like a piece of music in which a single theme is explored, questioned, modulated and restated. However, each time the central theme is returned to, it will, hopefully, have gathered depth and resonance due to the preceding contemplation.

The meaning of the words is not in the words themselves. Their meaning is in the contemplation from which they arise and to which they point. The text, therefore, is laid out with ample space in order to encourage a contemplative approach.

Having said that, the conclusions drawn are only meant to uproot the old, conventional and dualistic formulations that have become so deeply embedded in the way we seem to experience ourself and the world.

Once these old formulations have been uprooted, they do not need to be abandoned. They can still be used as provisional ideas that have a function to play in certain aspects of life.

The new formulations are perhaps closer or more accurate expressions of our experience than the old ones, but their purpose is not to replace the old certainties with new ones.

They simply lead to an open Unknowingness, which can be formulated from moment to moment in response to a given situation, including a question about the nature of experience.

There are many ways to come to this open Unknowingness, and the dismantling of our false certainties through investigation is just one of them that is offered here.

\* \* \*

If our attention were now to be drawn to the white paper on which these words are written, we would experience the uncanny sensation of suddenly becoming aware of something that we simultaneously realise is so obvious as to require no mention. And yet at the moment when the paper is indicated, we seem to experience something new.

We have the strangely familiar experience of becoming aware of something which we were in fact already aware of. We become aware of being aware of the paper.

The paper is not a new experience that is created by this indication. However, our awareness of the paper *seems* to be a new experience.

Now, what about the awareness itself, which is aware of the paper? Is it not always present behind and within every experience, just as the paper is present behind and within the words on this page?

And when our attention is drawn to it, do we not have the same strange feeling of having been made aware of something that we were in fact always aware of, but had not noticed?

Is this awareness not the most intimate and obvious fact of our experience, essential to and yet independent of the particular qualities of each experience itself, in the same way that the paper is the most obvious fact of this page, essential to and yet independent of each word?

Is this awareness itself not the support and the substance of every experience, in the same way that the paper is the support and the substance of every word?

Does anything new need to be added to this page in order to see the paper? Does anything new need to be added to this current experience in order to become aware of the awareness that is its support and substance?

When we return to the words, having noticed the paper, do we lose sight of the paper? Do we not now see the two, the apparent two, simultaneously as one? And did we not always already experience them as one, without realising it?



Likewise, having noticed the awareness behind and within each experience, do we lose sight of that awareness when we return the focus of our attention to the objective aspect of experience? Do we not now see the two, the apparent two, Awareness and its object, simultaneously as one? And has it not always been so?

Do the words themselves affect the paper? Does it matter to the paper what is said in the words? Does the content of each experience affect the awareness in which it appears?

Every word on this page is in fact only made of paper. It only expresses the nature of the paper, although it may describe the moon.

Every experience only expresses Awareness or Consciousness, although experience itself is infinitely varied.

Awareness or Consciousness is the open Unknowingness on which every experience is written.

It is so obvious that it is not noticed.

It is so close that it cannot be known as an object and yet is always known.

It is so intimate that every experience, however tiny or vast, is utterly saturated and permeated with its presence.

It is so loving that all things possible to imagine are contained unconditionally within it.

It is so open that it receives all things into itself.

It is so spacious and unlimited that everything is contained within it.

It is so present that every single experience is vibrating with its substance.

It is only this open Unknowingness, the source, the substance and the destiny of all experience, that is indicated here, over and over and over again.

Rupert Spira  
October 2008

## THE GARDEN OF UNKNOWING

The abstract concepts of the mind cannot apprehend Reality, although they are an expression of it.

Duality, the subject/object polarisation, is inherent in the concepts of the mind. For instance, when we speak of the 'body' we refer to an object, which in turn implies a subject. If we explore this object we discover that it is non-existent as such and is in fact only a 'sensation'.

However, a 'sensation' is still an object, and further exploration reveals that it is in fact made of 'sensing', of 'mind stuff', rather than anything physical.

'Sensing' in turn is discovered to be made of 'knowing'. And if we explore 'knowing' we find that it is made of Consciousness.

If we explore Consciousness we find that it has no objective qualities. And yet it is what we most intimately know ourselves to be. It is what we refer to as 'I'.

And if we explore 'I' we find it is made of...

The abstract concepts of the mind collapse here. They cannot go any further. There is no adequate name for that into which the mind dissolves. We are taken to the utmost simplicity of direct experience.

This deobjectification is the process of apparent *involution* through which That Which Cannot Be Named withdraws its projection of the mind, body and world, and rediscovers that it is the sole substance of the seamless totality of experience.

That Which Cannot Be Named, the Absolute Emptiness into which the mind collapses, then projects itself, *within itself*, back along the same path of apparent objectification, to recreate the appearance of the mind, body and world.

That Which Cannot Be Named, and yet which is sometimes referred to as 'I', Consciousness, Being, Knowingness, takes the shape of thinking, sensing or perceiving in order to appear as a mind, a body or a world.

This is the process of apparent *evolution* through which That Which Cannot Be Named gives birth to a mind, a body and a world, without ever becoming anything other than itself.

This process of evolution and involution is the dance of Oneness, That Which Cannot Be Named taking shape and dissolving, vibrating in every nuance of experience and dissolving itself into itself, transparent, open, empty and luminous.

Mind attempts to describe the modulations of this emptiness manifesting itself as the fullness of experience and this fullness recognising itself as emptiness, knowing all the time that in doing so it is holding a candle to the wind.

Mind describes the names and forms through which That Which Cannot Be Named refracts itself in order to make itself appear as two, as many, in order to make Consciousness/Being appear as Consciousness *and* Being.

And using the same names and forms, mind describes the apparent process through which That Which Cannot Be Named discovers that it never *becomes* anything, that it is always only itself and itself and itself.

Each statement that is made here is provisionally true in relation to one statement but false in relation to another. However, it is never *absolutely* true.

The purpose of every statement is to indicate the falsity of the previous one, only to await its own imminent demise.

Each is an agent of Truth, but never true.

Mind, in the broadest sense of the word,\* is made of concepts and appearances. It never frames or grasps Reality itself.

However, by speaking in this way, mind is being used to create *evocations* rather than *descriptions* of the experience of Consciousness knowing itself.

These evocations are temporary expressions of That Which Cannot Be Named, like flowers blossoming for a moment, shedding the perfume of their origin on the Garden of Unknowing.

\* The word 'mind' is used in two ways in this book. The first, as in this sentence, includes (a) thinking and imagining, (b) sensing (referring to bodily sensations) and (c) perceiving (referring to seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching, through which the world is 'known'). In this case the body and the world are understood to be projections of the mind. The second refers only to thinking and imagining. In most cases the latter meaning is intended, but occasionally mind is referred to in its broader meaning.

## CLEAR SEEING

All that is happening in these contemplations is the clear seeing of the essential nature of experience. There is no attempt to change or manipulate it, to create a peaceful or happy state, to get rid of suffering or to change the world. There is simply the clear seeing of the true nature of this current experience.

This clear seeing is not an intellectual understanding, although it may be formulated provisionally in intellectual terms when required by the current situation. Rather, it is the direct, intimate and immediate knowing of oneself resting in and as the formless expanse of Presence, and simultaneously dancing in the vibrancy and aliveness of every gesture and nuance of the body, mind and world.

The clear seeing of what is has a profound effect on the appearance of the mind, the body and the world, but that is not the object of this investigation. There is no object to this investigation.

Even the purpose of 'seeing clearly' turns out to be too much in the end. It is the thorn that removes the thorn, and when even this last trace of becoming has been dissolved in understanding, it too is abandoned, leaving only Being.

However, in most cases this exploration is a prelude to the revelation of Being. We start with experience and stay close to it. We do not start with a theory, a model, a map or a teaching, and then try to fit our experience into that model. Absolutely nothing is taken for granted.

We start with experience and we end with experience. We allow the naked clarity of experience itself to relieve itself of the burden of duality.

We simply look at the facts of experience. 'Is it true of my experience in this moment?' That is the only reference point.

The few core beliefs and preconceived ideas that we hold about the nature of ourselves and the world are exposed in this disinterested investigation. We do not do anything to these beliefs. We are not trying to destroy them but rather to expose them.

Belief and doubt are two sides of the same coin. When a belief is exposed it is found either to be true (in which case the belief becomes a fact and the doubt that was implicit in it is dissolved) or to be false (in which case both the belief and the doubt will naturally come to an end).

Any feelings or patterns of behaviour that were dependent on the belief that has been exposed will, in due time, naturally dissolve, simply because they are no longer nourished by the belief. They die of neglect.

These feelings and patterns of behaviour are the counterpart at the level of the body to beliefs at the level of the mind, and their dissolution is accomplished in the same way. What was an *investigation* at the level of the mind is an *exploration* at the level of the body.

In this exploration these feelings and patterns of behaviour are exposed, and in this

exposure their power to separate is revealed to be non-existent. Separation is not simply *understood* to be an illusion. It is *felt* as such.

No longer nourished by belief, these feelings are exposed and seen for what they are. They die of the fierce clarity of being clearly seen.

This dissolution of beliefs and feelings has a profound effect on our lives, our ideas, our relationships, our bodies, our work, the world, in fact on everything.

However, the purpose of this investigation and exploration is not to change anything. It is simply the clear seeing of what is, and clear seeing is the shrine on which Being shines.

\* \* \*

This line of investigation could be likened to taking several MRI scans of an apple. With each scan the apple is sliced up in different ways, each one showing a new section or point of view.

However, the apple is never touched in this process. It always remains just as it is, whole, untouched, unmodified, undivided. It only appears to be divided, and this appearance gives a more complete picture of its true undivided nature.

It is the same with our experience. The contemplations in this book are like MRI scans of our experience. They look at experience from many angles, spreading it out, opening it up. However, our experience itself is always one.

It is always a seamless, unified totality with no separate parts, and its nature is always only pure Consciousness. That is a fact of experience and it never changes, even if we think it to be otherwise.

This line of enquiry comes from the truth of direct experience and therefore leads back to it. It leads to the reality of experience, to the experience of Consciousness knowing itself, knowingly. It is ruthless and tender at the same time, and utterly simple.

It is sometimes thought that this kind of enquiry is intellectual and abstract, bearing little relation to our day-to-day experience. However, it is only because our conventional dualistic concepts about the nature of Reality are themselves so densely interwoven with abstract and erroneous ideas that they require some meticulous deconstruction.

In this case it has not yet been seen that what are considered to be our normal, commonsense assumptions are in fact themselves intellectual and abstract – that is, they have little to do with the facts of experience.

By the end of the book I hope it will be clear that it is our conventional ways of seeing that bear little relation to our actual moment-by-moment experience.

And, by contrast, I hope that the formulations expressed here will be understood as simple and obvious statements about the nature of our experience, albeit within the limited confines of the mind.

For instance, it is usually considered a fact of indisputable common sense that the body and the world exist as physical objects in time and space, independent and separate from Consciousness. Any line of reasoning that suggests that this is not the case, that there may be only the experience of Consciousness knowing itself in and as objects, is sometimes considered to be intellectual and abstract.

However, it is precisely the idea that the body and the world exist as objects in time and

space, independent and separate from Consciousness, that is intellectual and abstract. It is not based on experience. By the same token, the idea that there is only the experience of Consciousness knowing itself in and as objects becomes a self-evident, obvious and indisputable fact of experience.

Of course the *appearance* of physical objects continues, but appearance is no longer mistaken for Reality.

However, it would be a misunderstanding to think that appearances have to disappear for Reality to be revealed. It is simply that the misinterpretation is no longer superimposed onto experience.

The body and the world continue to appear in the same way, but it is clearly seen that the experience of the appearance of the body and the world takes place simultaneously with the experience of Consciousness knowing itself. It is the same experience, one experience.

The experience of Consciousness knowing itself knowingly in and as all appearances becomes as obvious and self-evident as the previous, apparently obvious and self-evident experience of objects existing in time and space, independent and separate from Consciousness.

## WHAT TRULY IS

Whatever it is that is seeing and understanding these words is what is referred to here as 'Consciousness'. It is what we know ourselves to be, what we refer to as 'I'.

Everything that is known is known *through* Consciousness. Therefore, whatever is known is only as good as our knowledge of Consciousness.

What do we know about Consciousness?

We know that Consciousness *is*, and that everything is known *by* and *through* it. However, Consciousness itself cannot be known as an object.

If Consciousness had any objective qualities that could be known, it would be the Knower of those qualities, and would therefore be independent of them. Thus, we cannot know anything objective about Consciousness.

So, if we do not know *what* Consciousness is, what 'I' am, but we know *that* it is, and if everything that we experience is known *through* or *by* this knowing Consciousness, how can we know what anything really is?

All we can know for sure about an object is that it *is*, and that quality of 'isness' is what is referred to here as Being or Existence. It is that part of our experience that is real, that lasts, that is not a fleeting appearance. It is also therefore referred to as its Reality.

We know that Consciousness is present now, and we know that whatever it is that is being experienced in this moment exists. It has Existence.

If we think we know something objective about ourselves or the world, then whatever that something is that we think we know will condition our subsequent enquiry into the nature of experience. So before knowing what something is, if that is possible, we must first come to the understanding that we do not know what anything *really* is.

Therefore, the investigation into the nature of ourselves and the world of objects initially has more to do with the exposure of deeply held ideas and beliefs about the way we think things are than with acquiring any new knowledge. It is the exposure of our false certainties.

Once a belief that we previously held to be a fact is exposed as such, it drops away naturally. It remains to be seen whether or not something further than the exposure of our false ideas about the nature of things needs to be accomplished. We cannot know that until all false ideas have been removed.

Many of our ideas and beliefs about ourselves and the world are so deeply ingrained that we are unaware that they are beliefs and we take them, without questioning, for the absolute truth.

For instance, we believe that we are a body, that we are a man or a woman and that we were born and will die. We believe that we are an entity amongst innumerable other entities, and that this entity resides somewhere in the body, usually behind the eyes or in the chest area.

We believe that we are the subject of our experience and that everything and everyone else is the object. We believe that we, as this subject, are the doer of our actions, the thinker of our thoughts, the feeler of our feelings, the chooser of our choices. We believe that this entity we consider ourselves to be has freedom of choice over some aspects of experience but not others.

We believe that time and space are actually experienced, that they existed before we did and will continue to do so after we have died.

We believe that objects exist independently of their being perceived, that Consciousness is personal and limited, that it is a by-product of the mind and that the mind is a by-product of the body.

These and many other such beliefs are considered to be so obviously true that they are beyond the need of questioning. They amount to a religion of materialism to which the vast majority of humanity subscribes. This is especially surprising in areas of life that purport to deal explicitly with questions about the nature of Reality, such as religion, philosophy and art.

The only field available for enquiry is experience itself. This may seem almost too obvious to mention, but its implications are profound. It implies that we never experience anything *outside* experience. If there *is* something outside experience, we have absolutely no knowledge of it, and therefore cannot legitimately assert that it exists.

This in turn implies that if we are to make an honest investigation into the nature of Reality, we have to discard any presumptions that are not derived from direct experience. Any such presumptions will not relate to experience itself and will therefore not relate to ourselves or the world. If we honestly stick to our experience, we will be surprised to find how many of our assumptions and presumptions turn out to be untenable beliefs.

All experience takes place here and now, so the nature of Reality, whatever that is, must be present in the intimacy and immediacy of this current experience.

‘I’, Consciousness, is present, and *something*, these words, the sound of the traffic, a feeling of sadness, whatever it is, is also present.

We do not know what this Consciousness is. Nor do we know what the reality of these words or the current experience is. However, there is the *Consciousness* of something and there is the *Existence* of that something. Both are present in this current experience.

What is the relationship between them?

\* \* \*

The mind has built a powerful edifice of concepts about Reality that bears little relation to actual experience, and as a result Consciousness has veiled itself from itself. These concepts are built out of mind and therefore their deconstruction is one of the ways through which Consciousness comes to recognise itself – that is, to know itself again.

Consciousness is in fact always knowing itself. However, through this deconstruction of concepts, Consciousness comes to recognise itself, not through the reflection of apparent objects, but knowingly and directly.

Concepts are not destroyed in this process. They are still available for use when needed.

In the contemplations that this book comprises it is acknowledged that the purpose of



reasoning is not to frame or apprehend Reality. However, it is also acknowledged that the mind has constructed complex and persuasive ideas that have posited an image of ourself and the world that is very far from the facts of our experience.

These ideas have convinced us that there is a world that exists separate from and independent of Consciousness. They have persuaded us to believe that 'I', the Consciousness that is seeing these words, is an entity that resides inside the body, that it was born and will die, and that it is the *subject* of experience whilst everything else, the world, the 'other', is the *object*.

Although this is never our actual experience, the mind is so persuasive and convincing that we have duped ourself into believing that we actually experience these two elements, that we experience the world separate and apart from ourself, and that we experience our own self as a separate and independent consciousness.

In the disinterested contemplation of our experience we measure the facts of experience itself against these beliefs.

The falsity of the ideas that the mind entertains about the nature of Reality, about the nature of experience, is exposed in this disinterested contemplation.

All spiritual traditions acknowledge that Reality cannot be apprehended with the mind. As a result of this understanding some teachings have denied the use of the mind as a valid tool of enquiry or exploration.

It is true that Consciousness is beyond the mind and cannot therefore be framed within its abstract concepts. However, this does not invalidate the use of the mind to explore the nature of Consciousness and Reality.

Ignorance is composed of beliefs, and belief is already an activity of mind. If we deny the validity of mind, why use it in the first place to harbour beliefs?

By reading these words, we are, consciously or unconsciously, agreeing to accept the validity and, by the same token, the limitations of the mind.

We are giving the mind credibility in spite of its limitations. We are acknowledging its ability to play a part in drawing attention to that which is beyond itself or outside the sphere of its knowledge.

It would be disingenuous to use the mind to deny its own validity; our very use of the mind asserts its validity. However, it is a different matter to use the mind to understand its own limitations.

It may well be that at the end of a process of exploring the nature of experience, using the full capacity of its powers of conceptual thinking, the mind will come to understand the limits of its ability to apprehend the truth of the matter and, as a result, will spontaneously come to an end. It will collapse from within, so to speak.

However, this is a very different situation from one in which the mind has been denied any provisional credibility on the basis that nothing it says about Reality can ultimately be true.

As a result of the exposure of beliefs and feelings that derive from preconceived, unsubstantiated notions of Reality, a new invitation opens up, another possibility is revealed.

This possibility cannot be apprehended by the mind because it is beyond the mind. However, the obstacles to this new possibility are revealed and dissolved in this investigation.

They are dissolved by our openness to the possibility that in this moment we actually

experience only one thing, that experience is not divided into ‘I’ and other, subject and object, me and the world, Consciousness and Existence.

We are open to the possibility that there is only one single, seamless totality, that Consciousness and Existence are one, that there is only one Reality.

The edifice of dualistic ideas, which seems to be validated by experience, is well constructed, made up of beliefs at the level of the mind and feelings at the level of the body, tightly interwoven, mutually substantiating and validating one another.

In the disinterested contemplation of these ideas and feelings, their falsity is unraveled. We see clearly that our ideas do not correspond to our experience. This paves the way for experience to reveal itself to us as it truly is, as in fact it always is, free from the ignorance of dualistic thinking.

We begin to experience ourself and the world as they truly are.

Our experience itself does not change but we *feel* that it changes. Reality remains as it always is, for it is what it is, independent of the ideas we entertain about it.

However, our *interpretation* changes, and this new interpretation becomes the cornerstone of a new possibility.

This new possibility comes from an unknown direction. It does not come as an object, a thought or a feeling. It is unveiled, in most cases, as a series of revelations, each dismantling part of the previous edifice of dualistic thinking.

And the unfolding of this revelation, in turn, has a profound impact on the appearance of the mind, the body and the world.

\* \* \*

Consciousness veils itself from itself by pretending to limit itself to a separate entity, and then forgets that it is pretending.

As a corollary to this self-limitation, Consciousness projects all that is not this ‘separate self’ outside of itself. This projection is what we call ‘the world’. Thus the separation between ‘I’ and ‘the world’ is born.

In reality, this separation has never taken place. If we look for it, we can never actually find it. Ignorance is an illusion. It is an illusion that is wrought through the conceptual powers of the mind, through erroneous beliefs.

These beliefs are created and maintained through a process of deluded thinking – that is, by thinking that bears no relation to actual experience. The dissolution of these beliefs is accomplished by exploring and exposing them, using direct experience as the guiding reference.

Nothing new is created by this process of exploration. Its purpose is not enlightenment or self-realisation. It is simply to see clearly what is.

Our beliefs are the root cause of psychological suffering, and they are dismantled by a process of contemplative investigation.

What we normally consider to be a line of investigation begins with assumptions that are considered to be implicitly true. In this contemplation we start with the same assumptions, but we measure them against the truth of our experience. We do not build on them; we deconstruct them.

This line of reasoning leads to understanding. However, understanding does not take

place in the mind. It is beyond the mind. It is a moment when Consciousness experiences itself directly and knowingly.

Understanding is not *created* by a process in the mind, any more than blue sky is created by a clearing in the clouds. However, it may be *revealed* by the mind.

Understanding is often preceded by a line of enquiry and can subsequently be formulated by the mind. Such a formulation, which comes from understanding and not from concepts, has the power to take us to the experience of Reality.

Through its reasoning powers the mind is brought to its own limit, and as a result the edifice of mind collapses. This is the experience of understanding, the timeless moment in which Consciousness is revealed to itself.

Consciousness perceives itself. It knows itself, knowingly.

## EVERYTHING FALLS INTO PLACE

I, this Consciousness that is seeing these words and experiencing whatever it is that is being experienced in this moment, is not located inside a mind.

The mind is not located inside a body, and the body is not located inside a world.

The body is simply the *sensation* of the body, and the world is simply the *perception* of the world.

Take away sensing and perceiving from the experience of the body and the world, and what objective qualities are left of them? None!

Sensations and perceptions are made out of mind – that is, they are made out of sensing and perceiving.

There is no other substance to them than sensing and perceiving.

If there were another substance, independent of sensing and perceiving, that constituted the body and the world, that substance would remain after sensing and perceiving had been withdrawn.

However, nothing objective remains of the experience of the body and the world when sensing and perceiving have been withdrawn.

And if we look clearly at the substance of mind, the substance of perceiving and sensing, we find that it is none other than the Consciousness in which it appears.

If there were another substance, apart from Consciousness, that constituted the mind, then that substance would remain after Consciousness had been withdrawn from the experience of the mind. However, when Consciousness is withdrawn from the mind, the mind vanishes absolutely, leaving only Consciousness.

The mind, the body and the world are located *inside* Consciousness and are made only *out of* Consciousness. That is our experience.

This is not a new experience that is arrived at through enquiry or meditation. It has always been our experience. We just may not have noticed it. In meditation we simply notice that this is always already the case.

\* \* \*

If we try to perceive this perceiving Consciousness as an object, we find that it is impossible.

Take the analogy of Consciousness as space, and imagine that this space, like Consciousness, is conscious and aware, that it has the capacity to see, to perceive, to experience, that it is an ‘experiencing space’.

Now imagine what this space would perceive if it were to look for itself, if it were to look at itself.

It would not see anything objective, because space cannot be perceived. It is empty, transparent, colourless and invisible. This perceiving space is too close to itself to be able to see itself.

The space that is being looked for is the space that is looking.

Only an object can be perceived objectively, so this perceiving space would see only the objects that are present within it, not the space itself.

However, we have said that this space is, like Consciousness, endowed with the capacity to experience, that it is an 'experiencing space'. So to look for itself is unnecessary because it is, by definition, *already* perceiving itself. It is already experiencing itself, because that is what it is. Its nature is 'experiencing'.

Its being itself *is* the knowing or experiencing of itself.

However, the experience of 'experiencing itself' is colourless, transparent and invisible. It has no objective qualities. There is nothing that is being *objectively* experienced.

And because this conscious space is accustomed to experiencing objects, it construes this non-objective experience of itself, this colourless, transparent, invisible experience, as a non-experience. It thinks that itself, this conscious space, is not present.

At this point there are three options for this space:

One is to search for itself as an objective experience, not understanding that it is already experiencing itself and cannot therefore ever find itself anywhere else.

The second is to identify itself with some of the objects that are present and thereby satisfy the sense of identity that is inherent within itself. In this way it mixes up its own identity with an object.

The third is to see clearly that it is already only experiencing itself and always has been.

\* \* \*

Whatever is seen or perceived is an object, an object of the mind, body or world.

Whatever is perceived is not this perceiving Consciousness. It is an object that is appearing *to* it, *within* it.

If Consciousness cannot be perceived as an object, how do we know that it has a limit?

Do we *experience* a limit to this perceiving Consciousness?

It is impossible to experience a limit to Consciousness because such a limit would, by definition, have some objective quality.

Such an apparent limit would have to be an object and, like all objects, would itself appear *within* Consciousness. Consciousness would be *aware* of it, but would not be *defined* by it.

In fact, an object that appears within Consciousness tells us nothing about Consciousness other than that it is present and aware, that it *is*, just as a chair tells us that the space in which it appears is present.

Therefore, we have no actual experience of a limit to Consciousness.

If there is no experiential evidence to suggest that Consciousness is limited, on what grounds do we believe that it is personal? Why do we think that we, Consciousness, are a personal entity inside the body?

Thoughts are limited. Bodies are limited. The world is limited. However, there is no experiential evidence to validate the belief that Consciousness, in which the mind, the body and the world appear, is limited or personal.

If we claim that Consciousness has a limit there must, by definition, be an experience of that limit, and therefore of that which exists *outside* that limit, of something that *borders* Consciousness.

How could we have an experience of such an object, if that object were itself outside the limit of Consciousness? How could we be conscious of something beyond Consciousness?

Consciousness is required for every experience, and therefore it is not possible to experience something outside Consciousness. And if we do not experience such an object, how can we say that anything exists outside Consciousness?

We have no experience of the existence of anything outside Consciousness, therefore we have no experience of a limited or personal Consciousness.

Consciousness is transparent, colourless, Self-luminous, Self-experiencing, Self-knowing, Self-evident. That is our experience in this moment.

Consciousness is known as Omnipresence, because there is nowhere where Consciousness is not. It is not that Consciousness is everywhere. It is that every 'where' is *in* Consciousness.

Consciousness is known as Omniscience, because whatever is known is known *by* and *through* Consciousness. It knows all that is known.

It is known as Omnipotence, because whatever appears depends solely on Consciousness for its existence. Whatever appears emerges *out of*, is sustained *by* and is dissolved *into* Consciousness. Consciousness creates everything out of its own Being.

\* \* \*

Consciousness cannot be known by the mind. The mind is an object. It does not know anything. It is itself known by Consciousness.

Therefore, Consciousness cannot be described by the mind. The images and metaphors that are used in these contemplations are not *descriptions* of Consciousness. They are *evocations* of Consciousness.

They are evocations of the non-objective experience of Consciousness knowing itself, the experience of Consciousness recognising itself, remembering itself.

They are invitations from Consciousness to Consciousness, to be *knowingly* itself.

If we have no experience of a limit or a boundary to Consciousness, if we have no experience of a personal Consciousness, how do we know that the Consciousness 'in you' and the Consciousness 'in me' are different? There is no evidence in our experience to suggest that we have different Consciousnesses, or indeed that there is more than one Consciousness.

Mind can know nothing of Consciousness and yet, at the same time, all that is known through mind *is* the Knowingness of Consciousness.

Consciousness cannot frame or define itself within the limits of mind, although everything that appears in mind is its expression.

We make this investigation and come to the understanding that there is no experiential

evidence of a separate, personal, limited Consciousness. That is as far as the mind can go.

In coming to this deep conviction, we open ourselves to another possibility, the possibility that there is only one Consciousness. We explore and experiment with this new possibility in our lives, and it is the response we get from the universe in our actual experience that is the confirmation of this possibility.

As this conviction becomes deeper and deeper, so the confirmation from the universe becomes more and more obvious. Everything falls into place.

Like a landscape that appears gradually out of the mist without our doing anything to bring it about, so it becomes more and more obvious, without our doing anything about it, that we, Consciousness, have only ever been experiencing our own unlimited Self and that the experience of the world is the revelation of our own infinite and eternal Being.

\* \* \*

The very best that the mind can do is to explore its own limits and come to the conclusion that it does not and cannot know what anything really is.

However, this is a manner of speaking. There is no mind. Mind is simply the current thought, if there is a current thought. And a current thought cannot do anything or explore anything, any more than a lamppost can do or explore anything.

So when we say the mind can explore its own limits we are using conventional dualistic language. It should not be concluded from this that the implicitly dualistic presumptions that are encoded in our language are being condoned here.

When we say that the mind can explore its limits we are really saying that Consciousness, the Knowingness that *is* Consciousness, takes the shape of abstract thinking and, through this shape, explores its own capacity to represent itself in the abstract terms of thought.

In doing so it discovers that the abstract concepts of mind do not represent its own direct, intimate experience of itself.

It is the exploration and the subsequent discovery that Consciousness cannot be found or represented by mind, by thinking, which truly brings this search for itself in the mind to an end.

As the mind, as seeking and thinking, comes to an end, that which is ever-present as the support and substance of the mind is revealed.

This is the experience of understanding. It is a non-objective experience and is therefore timeless.

However, this revelation is not *caused* by the cessation of mind, any more than light is caused by the cessation of darkness. It is the line of enquiry that brings the mind to its natural ending, and as the mind dissolves, that which understands it, that which 'stands under' it, is revealed.

During the appearance of mind, That Which Is Ever-Present *is* the substance of that appearance and yet is apparently disguised as such. In this case Consciousness fails to recognise itself.

However, once this understanding, this Self-recognition, has taken place, Consciousness no longer needs to forget itself during the appearance of the mind (or the

body or the world). It recognises itself *in* and *as* the activity of the mind as well as in its absence.

What it is that brings about this Self-recognition is a mystery. It is like looking in the mirror and exclaiming, 'Oh, it's me!'

Having said that, with this Self-recognition comes the felt understanding that Consciousness has always only ever been experiencing itself. It becomes obvious that no new experience has taken place.

It is understood that the experience of knowing itself, and *only* that experience, has always been taking place, and it does not make sense to ascribe a cause to something that has always been present.

To look for a cause for this Self-recognition, just as to look for a reason for it, is itself the very denial of this Self-recognition, and yet that denial is in turn the shape that this ever-present Self-recognition is taking at that moment.

How can that which is the cause of all things be said to have a cause? What could cause Consciousness, if everything that might be a candidate for being such a cause is itself caused *by* Consciousness?

Consciousness is its own cause, which is the same as saying that it is causeless.



## ABIDE AS YOU ARE

Meditation is simply to abide as oneself.

We remain as we are and allow the mind, the body and the world to appear and disappear without interference.

If there is interference, then that is understood to be part of the mind's activity and is allowed to be exactly as it is.

Our objective experience consists of thoughts and images, which we call the mind; sensations, which we call the body; and sense perceptions, which we call the world. In fact, we do not experience a mind, a body or a world as such. We experience thinking, sensing and perceiving.

All that we perceive are our perceptions. We have no evidence that a world exists outside our perception of it. We do not perceive a world 'out there'. We perceive our *perception* of the world, and all perception takes place in Consciousness.

In meditation we simply allow this thinking/sensing/perceiving to be whatever it is from moment to moment. This thinking/sensing/perceiving is always moving, always changing. We simply allow it to flow through us, to appear, to remain and to disappear. In fact, that is all that is happening anyway.

That in which the thinking/sensing/perceiving appears is what we call 'I'. It is the conscious, witnessing Presence which experiences whatever it is that is being experienced from moment to moment.

There is no need to make this witnessing Presence conscious. It is already so. There is no need to make it peaceful. It is already so. There is no need to wake it up. It is always already awake. There is no need to make it unlimited and impersonal. It is already so.

And there is no need to make the mind, the body and the world peaceful. They are always moving and changing.

We remain as we are and we allow the mind, the body and the world to be as they are.

As we do so, the mind, the body and the world gradually return to their true place and their nature is revealed. We see that in fact they never left their true place, that they were never anything other than what they truly are. We simply stop imagining that they are distant, separate and other and, as a result, they stop appearing as such.

\* \* \*

Imagine a room filled with people conversing. In this metaphor the space of the room is this conscious, witnessing Presence that we call 'I'. The people are thoughts and images, bodily sensations and world perceptions.

There are all sorts of people in the room: large, small, kind, unkind, intelligent, unintelligent, loud, quiet, friendly, unfriendly...a complex diversity of characters,

moving, changing, interacting, appearing and disappearing, each doing their own thing.

What does the behaviour of these people matter to the space of the room? Does the space have anything to gain or lose by trying to change any of the people? Is the space itself changed when one of the people changes?

The space is independent of the people, although the people are dependent on the space. The space is present before the people arrive, it is present during their stay and it is present when they depart. In fact, it is present before the building was constructed and it will be present after it is demolished. It is always present.

The same is true of Consciousness. Whatever is being experienced in this moment is taking place within Consciousness, and Consciousness itself remains as it is at all times, unmodified, unchanged, unconcerned.

Consciousness is what we are, and to be as we are is the highest form of meditation. All other meditations are simply a modulation of this meditation of *abidance as we are*.

To begin with, meditation may seem to be something that we do, but later we discover that it is simply what we are. It is the natural condition of all beings.

It cannot be brought about, because it is already the case. It cannot be attained, because it is what we always already are. It cannot be lost, for there is nowhere for it to go.

We simply allow everything to be as it is. As we allow everything to be as it is, we are, unknowingly at first, taking our stand in our true nature. In fact, we have never left our true nature, but now we begin to reside there knowingly.

At some stage it dawns on us that 'I' does not *abide* in its true nature. Who is there to abide in something other than itself? It simply *is* that. We simply *are* that and always have been.

Even to say 'always' is not quite right, because 'always' implies an infinite extension in time. The idea of an infinite extension in time appears in the 'I', in Consciousness, from time to time, but the 'I' never appears in an infinite extension in time.

It just *is*. 'I', Consciousness, just *am*.

## THE DROP OF MILK

Our experience consists of that which is known and that which knows. It is not just the world but also the body and the mind that are known.

The world is known, so it cannot be the Knower. It cannot be that which knows. The body and the mind are also known, so they cannot be that which knows. The world, the body and the mind are experienced, so they cannot be that which experiences.

Whenever the body, the mind and the world are present, they are known. That which knows the body, the mind and the world is present during their appearance *and* their absence.

That which is known cannot be the Knower, and the Knower cannot be known objectively.

Normally we are only aware of the known, but when attention is drawn to the presence of the Knower, to that which knows and experiences, whatever that is, it immediately becomes obvious that there is something present that is conscious of the body, the mind and the world.

As we do this, whatever it is that knows seems suddenly to become more present. It shines.

In fact, it is simply discovered to have been always present, but apparently eclipsed by our exclusive focus on the known.

The Knower is Consciousness. It is that which knows and experiences. It is this Consciousness that we refer to when we say 'I'.

When it is said, 'We give our attention to that which is known', it means that it is 'I', Consciousness, that gives its attention to that which is known.

When it is said, 'We give our attention instead to the Knower', it means that 'I', Consciousness, gives its attention to itself.

Of course, Consciousness is already itself. It does not need to give itself attention.

So when it is said, 'We give our attention to the Knower, to Consciousness', it means in practice that 'I', Consciousness, withdraws its attention from its exclusive focus on the known, on objects.

In doing so Consciousness is, without knowing it to begin with, naturally 'returning to itself', which means it is becoming aware of itself. It doesn't actually return to itself, because it never left itself. It is never not aware of itself.

Even when Consciousness is exclusively focused on objects, it never leaves itself. It just seems to forget itself from time to time. It seems to ignore itself.

However, even as it ignores itself, something is known, and that knowing *is* the Knowingness of Consciousness knowing itself. Hence there is never any real ignorance.

For this reason, there is no answer to the question as to the cause or reason for

ignorance. How can there be a cause or a reason for something that is non-existent?

We cannot answer the question ‘Why?’ because the question itself *creates* the ignorance about which it is asking. It apparently creates time, cause and effect and, therefore, the appearance of ‘two things’, which are themselves found to be non-existent when the nature of experience is clearly seen.

At the same time, Consciousness knows itself in the very knowing of this question. How then can apparent ignorance be said to be truly ignorant? It cannot.

When Consciousness looks for itself, it merges with itself. It is revealed to itself, and this revelation is the dissolution of the question. It is this Knowingness beyond the mind that is the true answer to all questions about the nature of experience.

Consciousness pretends to be other than it is and then, as that apparent other, it looks for itself. Of course, it can never find itself as an object because it already is itself, just as the eye cannot see itself.

However, it does not need to find itself because it already *is* itself. All that is required is to stop pretending that it is not itself.

What to the apparent other is a process of searching is to Consciousness simply the process of discovering that it always already knows itself.

\* \* \*

The mind is a series of abstract concepts that appear within Consciousness.

Every thought is an object, but the objectless Consciousness in which thoughts appear can never itself appear as a thought. Therefore, it is impossible to think of Consciousness.

When we think of anything other than Consciousness (or Truth or Reality or whatever word is used) we end up with a concept, an idea of that thing, which is not the thing itself. It is a *representation* of that thing in the mind’s code – that is, it is a concept.

However, the thought about Consciousness or Reality is unique amongst all thoughts. When we try to think of Consciousness, it is like looking into a black hole. It is not even black. The mind simply cannot go there. It cannot go to that objectless place because the mind is itself an object. How could an object fit into a space that has no dimensions?

So as the mind tries to turn itself towards Consciousness, it dissolves. It is consumed in what is, from its own point of view, the nothingness of Consciousness. However, its dissolution is the revelation of Presence, the revelation of that in which thought dissolves.

The thought about Consciousness is unique in that it does not lead to a concept, to a substitute for the thing itself, but rather to the *reality* of Consciousness itself. It leads directly to its referent, not to a symbol. It leads to the direct experience of Consciousness knowing itself, knowingly.

Nothing objective is known in this placeless place of Consciousness.

It is a knowing, but not a knowing *of something*. It is pure Knowingness.

The seeking thought, which looks for Consciousness, merges with Consciousness. It reveals Consciousness.

The seeking thought is like a sugar cube. Looking for Consciousness is like putting the sugar cube in a cup of tea. The tea dissolves the sugar cube. Likewise, Consciousness

dissolves the seeking thought.

A more accurate metaphor would be that of a drop of milk in a jar of water. The milk is essentially the same substance as the water, although it is coloured by a slight taint of objectivity. It is white, not colourless. As we watch the drop of milk, it expands into the water, losing its form by degrees, until it is utterly merged into the surrounding water.

Such is the thought that seeks Consciousness, that is directed towards Presence. It is essentially made out of the very same Consciousness that it is seeking, but it does not know this yet and hence there is some apparent differentiation between itself and Consciousness. It is opaque. It is not transparent.

As it searches for Consciousness, it becomes more and more like Consciousness, which means it loses its otherness, its opacity, its apparent objectivity.

The water, which was already present in the milk, loses its whiteness and remains as it is, as water.

This expansion of the drop of milk into the surrounding water is the process of refinement that our thoughts go through as we try to approach Consciousness. Consciousness cannot be found as a thought, so thought is gradually purified of its objectivity as it tries to find Consciousness.

A time comes when the thought gives up its last layer of objectivity and merges into Presence. In fact, it is Presence that gradually gives up identification with subtler and subtler layers of objectivity, until it comes to recognise thought as its very own Self.

The mind does not *find* Truth. It does not *find* Reality. It is *dissolved* in it.

The mind cannot release itself. It is itself released into the infinite expanse of Consciousness that is its ground.

Understanding is the dissolution of the mind into its support, into its ground. It is the experience of Consciousness knowing itself, returning to itself knowingly.

It is not an objective experience. It is the experience of Knowing. This experience is always present, whether objects are present or not.

We become what we think about.

We are both the subject and the object of the thought that seeks Consciousness.

For Consciousness, to know itself is to be itself and to be itself is to know itself.

## CONSCIOUSNESS SHINES IN EVERY EXPERIENCE

Meditation is not an activity. It is the cessation of an activity.

In the final analysis, nothing that is absolutely true can be said of meditation, not even that it is the cessation of an activity, because meditation takes place or, more accurately, *is present* beyond the mind, and the mind, by definition, has no access to it.

However, in order to understand that meditation is not an activity, we first come to the understanding that it is the *cessation* of an activity.

This understanding is a very efficient tool for undermining the belief that meditation is something that we *do*.

Once we have fully understood that meditation is not an activity, the activity that we previously considered to be meditation will naturally come to an end. At that point, the understanding that meditation is not an activity has fulfilled its purpose and can also be abandoned.

Once the thorn has removed the thorn, both are thrown away.

In order to understand that meditation is not an activity, we can use the example of a clenched fist. If we take our open hand and slowly close it tightly, an effort is required both to clench the hand and to maintain it in that contracted gesture.

If we maintain the hand in this contracted gesture for some time, the muscles will become accustomed to this new position, and we will soon cease to be aware that a subtle effort is continually being applied in order to maintain it.

If someone now asks us to open our hand, we feel that the opening of the hand requires an effort. At some stage, as we open our hand, we will become aware of the fact that we are not applying a new effort in order to open the hand, but rather that we are relaxing a previous effort, of which we were no longer even aware.

The apparent effort to *open* the hand turns out to be the relaxation of the original effort to *contract* the hand. What appeared to be the *initiation* of an effort turns out to be the *cessation* of an effort.

Meditation works in a similar way. Our true nature is open, unlimited, free, conscious, Self-luminous and Self-evident. This is our moment-by-moment experience, although we may not be aware of it.

This open, free, unlimited Consciousness has contracted upon itself. It has seemingly shrunk itself into the narrow frame of a body and a mind, and limited itself to a tiny location in a vast space and into a brief moment in an endless expanse of time.

This is the primary self-contraction that open, free, unlimited Consciousness chooses from moment to moment of its own free will.

It draws a line within the seamless totality of its experience and says to itself, 'I am this and not that', 'I am here and not there', 'I am me and not other'.

Feeling itself isolated and therefore vulnerable and afraid, this open, free, unlimited

Consciousness now sets about supporting and protecting its new self-imposed identity as a fragment.

To effect this it reinforces its boundaries with layer upon layer of contraction. At the level of the mind these contractions are made out of desires and addictions on the one hand, and resistances, fears and rejections on the other. These are the many faces of our likes and dislikes, the 'I want' and the 'I don't want'.

At the level of the body these contractions are made out of bodily sensations with which Consciousness identifies itself. They are the apparent location of 'I' inside the body.

With each new layer of contraction this open, free, unlimited Consciousness forgets its own unlimited nature more and more profoundly, and in doing so throws a veil over itself. It hides itself from itself.

In spite of this there are frequent intrusions into its own self-generated isolation which remind itself of its real nature...the smile of a stranger, the cry of an infant, an unbearable grief, a brief desireless moment upon the fulfilment of a desire, a moment of humour, the peace of deep sleep, a pause in the thinking process, a memory of childhood, the transition between dreaming and waking, the recognition of beauty, the love of a friend, a glimpse of understanding.

These are moments that are offered to this now veiled presence of Consciousness, innumerable tastes of its own Freedom and Happiness, which remind it briefly of itself, before it is eclipsed again by the efficiency of the defences within which it has apparently confined itself.

In this way, with layer upon layer of self-contraction, Consciousness has reduced itself to a well-fortified, separate and vulnerable entity.

This is not an activity that took place sometime in the past and is now irrevocably cast in stone. It is an activity that is taking place now, in this moment.

This open, free, unlimited Consciousness is, without knowing it, *doing* this very activity of separation. This activity defines the 'person', the 'separate entity'.

The separate entity is something we, as Consciousness, *do*. It is not something we *are*.

\* \* \*

As a result of Consciousness's contracting upon itself and imagining itself to be a fragment in this way, it projects outside of itself everything that is not contained within the boundary of its own self-imposed and limited identity. The world now appears as 'outside' and 'other'. It becomes everything that 'Consciousness as a fragment' is not.

And this world that now appears separate from and outside of Consciousness seems to perfectly confirm Consciousness's new view of itself as a limited fragment. The world becomes the vast and potentially threatening container of this 'Consciousness as a fragment'.

Ironically, it is precisely *because* the world is, in reality, an appearance in Consciousness and an expression of it that it so accurately reflects the ideas that Consciousness entertains about it.

If Consciousness believes itself to be a fragment, to be limited, to be bound and to appear in time and space, then the world will appear as the counterpart of that fragment.

Having denied itself its own birthright, its own eternal, all-pervading status, Consciousness confers this same status on the world of appearances. It bestows its own

Reality on the world of appearances and, in exchange, appropriates for itself the fleeting fragility of that world.

It forgoes its own Reality as the ground and nature of all experience, and instead projects it onto its own creation, onto the world of appearances.

Consciousness exchanges its nature with the world of appearances. It has no alternative but to do this.

In fact, Consciousness never ceases to experience itself. Embedded within every experience is the taste of its own eternity.

However, having conceptualised itself into a limited and separate entity, it has to account for its own intimate experience of Presence, of Being, elsewhere, and hence confers it on the 'world', on the 'other'.

In this way, time and space *seem* to become the ground and substance of Reality, the *sine qua non* of our experience, and Consciousness in turn *seems* to display the intermittent, limited, changing qualities that really belong to the world of appearances.

Consciousness forgets that it has done this, that it is doing this, and as a result the world seems to inherit the characteristics of Consciousness. The world *seems* to become like Consciousness: solid, real, permanent and substantial.

In turn, Consciousness *seems* to give up its own innate qualities and to assume those that rightfully belong to the world of appearances – that is, it *seems* to become fleeting, momentary, fragile and insubstantial.

In short, Consciousness creates an appearance that is consistent with its own beliefs.

In fact, the belief of itself as a limited fragment and the appearance of the world as a solid and separate entity are co-created as a seamless, mutually validating whole.

William Blake expressed the same understanding as, 'As a man is, so he sees.' This could also be expressed, 'As Consciousness sees itself, so the world appears.' It is an almost watertight conspiracy, wrought of the freedom and creativity of Consciousness itself.

However, it is the very same power that enables the world to appear in accordance with Consciousness's view of itself as a fragment that in turn enables the world to appear in accordance with Consciousness's new view of itself when it begins to awaken to its own Reality, when it begins to remember itself.

This is the magical nature of the world: that the same world can be seen to validate either ignorance or understanding. In fact, it is the magical nature of *Consciousness*, its creativity, its omnipotence, which makes this possible!

\* \* \*

Whether we know it or not, we are always this open, free, unlimited Consciousness, and yet sometimes we forget this. It is our freedom to forget.

Once we have forgotten, no other freedom is available to us, save the freedom to remember again.

Although we are always this open, free, unlimited Consciousness, at times we seem to be limited. We *feel* limited. Consciousness experiences itself as being bound by its own projection.

Having projected a boundary within its own unlimitedness, Consciousness then



identifies itself with that limitation. It forgets its real nature. It ‘falls’ into ignorance.

As a result, Consciousness then feels that its own true nature is somehow strange, unknown and unfamiliar, that it has been lost and needs to be found, that it has been forgotten and needs to be remembered, that it is elsewhere, other and apart.

Consciousness does not realise that it is already precisely what it is looking for, that it is already itself.

It does not see clearly that the very Knowingness of whatever it is that is known in any moment is the knowing of itself.

However, no matter how deeply Consciousness identifies itself with a fragment of its own making, no matter how deep the ignorance of the thoughts, feelings and activities that are generated by this ignorance, no matter how successfully Consciousness conceals its own nature from itself, its memory of itself is always deeper than its forgetting.

This is always the case, simply by virtue of the fact that before Consciousness seems to become anything other than itself, it is still always only itself.

Consciousness is the primary experience in all experience, whatever the particular character of that experience. And for this reason, the search for itself, the desire to return to itself, to abide in itself, can never be extinguished.

Ironically, it is for the very same reason that the search will be continually undermined, because when it is understood that Consciousness always only experiences itself, it is understood simultaneously that Consciousness has nowhere to go and nothing to become.

Therefore, from the point of view of ignorance, the search is the first step that Consciousness takes in the return to itself. From the point of view of Understanding, the search is the first step that Consciousness takes away from itself. In neither case does Consciousness ever go anywhere.

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Even when Consciousness has veiled itself in a cloak of beliefs, doubts, fears and feelings, the taste of its own unlimited, free and fearless nature is embedded within every experience, and this taste is often experienced as a sort of nostalgia or longing.

This longing is often wrongly associated with an event or a time in our lives, often in childhood, when things seemed to be better, when life seemed to be happier. However, this longing is not for a state that existed in the past – it is for the peace and freedom of Consciousness that lies behind and is buried within every current experience.

What was present ‘then’ as ‘happiness’ was simply the unveiled presence of this very Consciousness that is seeing and understanding these words.

Consciousness projects this current experience out of itself. It then loses itself in this projection, in the mind/body/world that it has projected from within itself, and identifies itself with a part of it. It is as if it says to itself, ‘I am no longer this open, free, unlimited Consciousness. Rather, I am this limited fragment that I have just created within myself. I am a body.’

In doing so Consciousness forgets itself. It forgets its own unlimited nature. This forgetting is known as ‘ignorance’. It is Consciousness *ignoring* itself.

As a result of this Self-forgetting, the nostalgia appears and Consciousness longs to

return to itself, to be free. It does not realise, for the time being, that at every moment of this prodigal journey it is always only ever itself.

Meditation is simply the liberation of this projection from the burden of separation. It is the unwinding of the self-contraction, the unthreading of this web of confusion.

Instead of focusing its attention on the limited fragment, on the separate entity it has taken itself to be, Consciousness gives its own attention back to itself as it truly is. It returns to itself. It remembers itself.

And instead of projecting the world outside of itself, Consciousness reclaims it, takes it back inside itself.

The activity of identifying with a fragment and the activity of projecting the world outside are one and the same activity. By the same token, when one activity ceases, the other collapses.

Consciousness is so accustomed to thinking of itself as a limited entity and to the concomitant projection of the world outside of itself that it seems, to begin with, that remembering itself, returning to itself, is a *counteractivity*, something that Consciousness needs to *do* in order to find itself.

Like the opening of the hand, the unwinding of the self-contraction appears, to begin with, to be an activity.

However, each time Consciousness returns to itself, each time it relaxes its fixation on a separate entity, each time it opens itself without choice or preference to the full spectrum of whatever experience is appearing within itself, it is, without knowing it, undermining the habit of Self-avoidance, the habit of avoiding its own Reality.

In this way, Consciousness becomes more and more accustomed to remaining in itself, as itself, to no longer pretending to be something else, something other than itself.

The impulse to contract into the separate entity is progressively undermined. Consciousness stays at home.

The impulses to search, to seek, to avoid, to pretend, to contract keep appearing, but Consciousness is no longer compelled by them. It recognises the impulses but no longer acts on them. And, as a result, the frequency and ferocity of these impulses begin to subside.

Consciousness no longer goes out of itself towards things. It stays at home within itself and things come to it. Things – that is, thoughts, feelings and perceptions – come to it, appear to it, arise within it, but Consciousness no longer needs to forget itself in order to experience the body, the mind and the world.

Consciousness shines in every experience.

There comes a moment when everything falls into place. This open, free, unlimited Consciousness that is our own intimate Self realises that it has always been and will always be only itself, that it has never left itself for a fraction of a moment, that what appeared to be the return to itself, the remembering of itself, was simply the recognition of itself, the recognition that it has always only ever been abiding in and as itself.

Consciousness realises that the separate entity that it previously took itself to *be*, is in fact simply an activity that it *does*, from time to time.

By the same token, it realises that the activity that it seemed to *do* from time to time, the activity that we call meditation, is in fact what it always *is*.

It realises that meditation is not a state that comes and goes, but that it is that *in which*

all states come and go.

Meditation is simply the natural presence of Consciousness, ever-present, all-embracing, unchanging, unending, unlimited, Self-luminous, Self-knowing, Self-evident.

From the point of view of the limited, separate entity, all descriptions of meditation appear as something to be done by that separate entity. As soon as it is clearly seen that the separate entity is none other than a belief and a feeling that Consciousness entertains about itself, then the very words that previously seemed to describe a process or an activity called 'meditation', that seemed to be an injunction to *do* something, are now understood to be simply a description of how things *are*.

From the point of view of ignorance, the 'person' is what we are and 'meditation' is something that we do from time to time. From the point of view of understanding, 'meditation' is what we are and the 'person' is something that we do from time to time.

Meditation is not something that we *do*. Whether we know it or not, it is what we *are*.