

Introduction

The purpose of this book is to examine the question as to whether there is a dimension that is beyond time, beyond the human mind. Is there a perfume in this life; a beauty, depth, immensity, or is life principally a vapid affair of working our fingers to the bone and where one is consequently caught up in the endless pursuit of pleasure, as an escape? Most of us have not discovered that deep immensity, the infinite depth of life. Instead we live and work in what is an empty shallow pool and it is in this pool we seek out the freedom of an ocean. Our minds have remained throughout history rather petty, blinkered and conditioned; caught up in sensation, the craving for satisfaction and security in its various forms. Our life today may be about family and community love, our experiences and achievements continuing in the memories of children and friends we leave behind. Is life meaning predominantly about leaving an imprint in the pond of human consciousness or is there something immeasurable, something deeply blissful that is untouched by thought?

We are asking this question because we live by desire, sensation and fear; that may be the worship of sensual values, God or rational thinking, or it may be the love of humanity, the Earth or something else. Whatever we do, regardless of what that is or how we may do it, desire and fear are always there in the background ... poking us and driving our activity in ways we cannot see. The psychologists have come up with various names for psychological elements and processes: drive theory, adaptation, differentiation, object relations or the id, ego, social ego, the preconscious, unconscious and so on and so forth. A great deal of good work has been done, especially in the twentieth century. Psychology is not going to help us mind you if the psychologists are themselves confused. There is a great deal we need to put to the test and in this book we will. The unconscious remains unconscious for example because we don't put in the energy to see what we are; if we were truly alert there would be no unconscious. Meditation is awareness of oneself and self-understanding is never divorced from a 'hidden' aspect of the mind that is labelled. Meditation leaves no stone unturned.

The main problem is we don't seem to ask the right questions; we are instead looking for escapes, quick fixes and distractions. This creates all kinds of dependencies - on governments, power structures, systems and gurus - an area which we will examine closely. Consciousness as a result remains fragmented as cracked shards of glass splintered and in pain. What this has done in the world is evident; one only needs to

look outside at what divides and separates. There is a crisis of consciousness. Our solution is we either hand ourselves over to a glorified tribe, to group mentality or we worship the specialist - the scientist, the intellectual, artist or poet – rather than think things through for ourselves. Thinking for oneself includes asking the question, 'Can thought and whatever it creates ever be free?' A whole chapter is dedicated to this pivotal question.

What is freedom? Does it exist or is it a fictional concept? A conditioned mind asking '*how am I to be free?*' is quite clearly a nonsensical question. Is there such a thing as freedom *from* something? For most of us we think so, we structure our entire lives around such a core belief. In this belief is implied resistance, expressed as control, subjugation, repression and discipline in daily life in order to accumulate the various securities needed to ward off life's uncertainties. None of these, as we will discover in this book, bring about freedom. Freedom exists when the level of our conditioning is seen and understood. One must begin by deconstructing this mad crazy world with its hierarchies and injustices. Deconstruct the views and beliefs that shape who we are; those we have absorbed in response to the trauma of living in a callous world and which have left us devoid of the self-empathy needed if there is to be love.

There will be a discursive look at our ideals of romantic love, passion and sex, all of which lie in the realm of the ego. This discussion leads to a description of what is genuine love, and the barriers which prevent experiencing of it. We question whether love is romanticism, sentimentality and emotionalism or whether is it empathy, care and compassion? Is there a relationship between love, joy, freedom, order, virtue, goodness, compassion and bliss? Can there be fulfilment if we do not understand relationship to reality? These are the sorts of questions we will explore and the fruit of this investigation has been carried onto the pages of this book.

As a shaman I have been engaged in all kinds of psychological exploration, including the entering of altered states of consciousness that are described as 'meditative' and 'near-death'. Fully conscious, aware and alert during these processes, the investigation is 24/7 one soon realises. It is life that is meditation; this means discovering the art of unpremeditated Being for yourself. There is no system to follow, no structure, no leader; there is no propaganda. Discovery is only meaningful if it yours.

We will investigate the interconnected relationship between humanity and reality,

detailing a series of questions that need to be posed and understood individually for each and every one of us to have contact with the living universe. Our discovery is to regain our symbiotic relationship to nature and the cosmos; a rebuilding of the scission between us and the universal order. This book is a conscientious work for those who are serious about radical transformation; who clearly see the world changes when we ourselves change. Seriousness is our integral intent and honest response to the challenges of life; it is the application of rigour and assiduousness to the problem of our confusion. But most of us prefer to let someone else do the thinking so that we can follow and indolently accept their authority. We are going to avoid such a scenario, taking responsibility squarely back. The process is one in which you and I will have to think together slowly, patiently and carefully as we investigate not your life or my life but our life. We are not that different you know, you and I or the Asian and the American.

I contend that the past cannot be relied upon; tradition is part of the problem. What we need today is healthy scepticism. What we are now we are because of the past and what we will be tomorrow is a reflection of what we are now. The real revolution is an inward revolution of empathy and communication, with time no longer the hindering factor in our questioning and our backyards no longer the barriers we stand behind when communicating. The immediacy of clarity is something that is its own action; it is supremely powerful and can change us in an instant.

The mastery of tantric bliss is not brought about by the following of a system but is rather the consequence of a state of supreme sovereign understanding and therefore freedom from the self-projected desires and fears of the ego. We are then able to meet others with empathy and compassion; a deep harmony and communion without ever demanding our narcissistic needs be met. The problem of human power struggle, from the subtle to the overt, is subsequently removed. Then we can live in peace, free from psychological conflict. Society will then correct itself to a more egalitarian way of living centred around the tender and nurturing care of children. But we are not prepared to do that at this moment in time, to completely transform ourselves and reach out in relationship; for most of us the self-image, what we believe to be our security, must be maintained.

Today we are so entranced by images that we cannot distinguish reality from illusion; more true in ourselves as much the outer world. We're living in an infantile world,

where superficial glitter conceals a complete lack of substance, where our attention is grabbed by the trivial and absurd. Integrity, sharing and temperance are lost in the impatient pursuit of notoriety, wealth or influence. Personal advancement becomes its own justification and a uniformly accepted morality. We question, are we at a loss if we don't have an idea about ourselves? Would it be so that one feels as if something is taken away, such that one may find it difficult to get out of bed in the morning? Is consciousness a matchbox idea of oneself or is there more to life than the content of our consciousness, as we know it now? If we don't investigate our confusion today and find out if there is something deeper life becomes a clichéd and somewhat pedestrian box of pleasures and pains little different from a gift box of ashes. This many call 'living'. Living this way we miss the sacredness and beauty of life.

Where there is an image, an idea about oneself, there is pleasure and pain; they go together. Must this process go on endlessly? What is one to do, we ask. To be nobody is what is extraordinary. This does not mean average in the sense of being comfortably numb or plain dull, nor does it mean being humble. Humbleness is another form of vanity. It is humility that is the very basis of love and humility cannot be cultivated. To cultivate humility is to deny it. This simple yet poignant understanding sweeps aside every world religion in an instant. It is perception that is action. This is the approach we will be adopting. Healthy scepticism and real learning is, we will discover, deconstructive and apophatic.

Insight emerges when we see what is false. A belief system, a pattern of thinking, repeated over and over for example can appear automatic and natural when it is in fact learnt. Our entire way of living, the way we have organized ourselves as a society and have been taught as children promotes the fundamental belief in the self. It started out with the soul, now it is the psychological ego. It is important to question the origin of our sense of self. Is authentic existence an ego state or a non-ego state? Is there such a thing as a healthy ego state? We will examine the teachings of Buddha, particularly with regard to the self, and the way in which he expounded those teachings to prepare us for liberation.

What did Buddha have to say about impermanence and our relationship with reality? Buddha is examined very closely without the baggage of Buddhism. It is Buddha who taught the merits of doubt, who taught that meditation is not silence but awareness. Freedom cannot exist where there is dependency. This axiom is laid bare fully in chapter

five. It is the freedom of understanding that brings us to love. Without love and where there is dependency there are only 'isms and an ism can never be truth. Discovery begins when all isms are put aside.

There is at the beginning and throughout the book a study into the nature and structure of fear. 'What is fear, why do we fear and what we do in response to fear?' are some of the questions that are examined. A brief overview on love is also introduced early on, an additional description that together lays an important foundation for the middle section of the book when 'love and hate' and 'good and evil' are blown open not as opposing forces but rather as states of understanding and misunderstanding. Fear, like desire, has intrinsic relationship to the process of thought, which is ego.

When thought seeks security it becomes corrupt. The way we live assuages fear rather than addresses it. Most of are so frightened we seek safety in the concentration of our energy to secure a little corner of the earth called 'home'. Clarity is seeing beneath the self-image and the image making process that drives it, it sees the actuality of the illusionary idea of psychological security. This is work we can do has adults, as mature individuals undoing the drivers of psychological conflict inflicted in our early years, all of which serve to separate us from one another. We are collectively deeply traumatized; our consciousness is not separate from the consciousness of humanity. Our personal insanity is just a matter of degree. What is it about our psychology that makes us blind?

Most of this, we will discover, has roots in the child raising methods of the past, the poisonous pedagogy. The parent neglects, represses or harms the child due to an image they have about themselves. The child who is neglected and harmed has no choice but to suppress their natural way of being, their biologically mandated expectations as a child born into the world. He or she creates the idea of not being enough, develops a distorted and confused sense of rightness or rather non-rightness of Being. The subsequent stress arising from many unnecessary power dynamics in what we call the family are all written into neurological networks as the child learns and experiences. It is extremely rare to find a person unaffected by their infant experiences. It is a process of conditioning that transfers between generations, slightly modified but in essence largely the same. Tradition is betrayal of the present and it is in the present that we can unlearn what we have learnt – from our parents and teachers, from the landlords and masters of the world. It is clarity that rewrites neurological maps. Meditation, which is not a system, is the process. Healthy community is a consequence.

What does it mean to be a healthy sane indivisible individual who is free of psychological conflict – to be free of desire and fear? Meekness, empathy and compassion are what are most powerful. As the book will explain, compassion begins not just in seeing the self-image and image making process but also in the perception of the deep current of human sorrow which moves under the surface of the river of consciousness. One is never diminished by sorrow, what is blissful cannot diminish. Compassion sees what is actually taking place in the world, the sorrow of humanity without dipping into politics, theories or ideals. It sees how trauma is transferred, how identification grips us, how we imitate one another, how the conditioning process operates across time. Most importantly it sees how we relate to one another. The majority of us, as we know ourselves now, are a whirlpool on the surface of the river of human consciousness just trying to survive. The quest to satisfy our desires is what keeps most of us going but it also makes us aggressive.

There will be no peace until we see the sorrow of human consciousness, what thought has done in this world, the brutality of it all. To see the limitation of thought is an exceptionally rare and powerful insight. It changes everything. In this perception there is transformation. Each chapter is designed, sequentially to bring us closer and closer to clear perception, to what is our true power. What is meek does not need to become anything and it is this that makes it powerful. Meekness is unpremeditated art; the freedom and joy of the 'Art of Being'.

Our presentation into what it means to die psychologically to what is our fundamental AMness helps facilitate a deeper understanding of some of the primary philosophical questions that have perplexed humans for centuries. The hope with this work is that we have not only a ground-breaking treatment of Buddhist thinking but also the beginnings of a presentation of the nature of reality that is simple and skilful.