
Emptiness and dzogchen

*With reference to a text by Vairocana,
called
"The Cuckoo's Cry Heralding the Good Fortune of Glorious Presence"*

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Revised by James Low

Note: The transcriber laid out what James said into lines like in a poem. James decided to retain her style of layout as he thought that some people might appreciate it.

The video recording of this teaching can be watched at vimeo.com/manage/albums/3184818

Excerpt:

***That lying cheating moon –
She has no light of her own,
Deceitful entrepreneur,
She takes the light from the sun, repackages it
And sends it down onto the earth for romantic people to swoon under!
The ego is like the moon;
The ego has no light of its own
It is repackaging the light of awareness.
Now, this is not a bad thing to do
But we do need to know that the light source is not the ego.***

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Dzogchen is the aspect of Buddhist teaching most directly concerned with awakening to one's full potential.

There are any many different paths in Buddhism.

According to the tradition the Buddha taught these different paths according to the different disposition of the people he met.

Gradually they became organised into different styles of practice.

Some people think that the gradual paths are very important and that if you go too quickly you will have problems.

Other people say that if you don't go quickly you will be dead before you get anywhere.

Whichever you choose has a lot to say about your own sense of yourself:

If you have a lot of fear and anxiety

If you have negative beliefs about yourself

You may fear hubris or narcissistic inflation if you imagine that you could become enlightened

You might believe messages that have been delivered to you by critical parents or strict teachers at school

You might have had difficult relationships and had you heart broken so now you feel hurt and wounded in life

"Being so small how could I hope for much?»

You have to recognise that this belief is a thought.

The door to your prison is guarded by thoughts.

When you believe your thoughts, you stay in the prison.

When you start to be suspicious about your own thoughts the door to freedom start to open a little bit.

"But if I don't trust my thoughts, who is the one who doesn't trust the thought? Is that also a thought?

Hmmm... I have to think about that!"

Round and round and round, and the years go by. You read books about Dharma and think a lot yet Nothing much changes.

But now you have more complicated thoughts about who you are

And these thoughts deepen the obscuration.

The traditional texts talk about non-conceptual awareness,

An awareness that is not resting on or depending on thoughts.

This is not something we are very familiar with.

In order to keep a job, to organise family affairs, and so on, many thoughts are necessary.

Thoughts seem to be our friends.

Even negative thoughts we have about ourself might feel like our friends.

"I know I'm a limited person."

And it's good to know that

Because if you don't know your limitations, how can you make any progress?

On the other hand if you only know your limitations, how can you make any progress?

Thoughts are very addictive

Worse than heroin.

They don't cost you anything;

Thoughts come into your mind without effort.

But when you look back at your life, where have your thoughts taken you?

Since you were small, you have had many enthusiasms,

Many thoughts about who you were and what you wanted to do.
Many activities seemed completely central to your sense of your own identity—
And then they were gone.
Maybe when you were small you had special toys that you couldn't get to sleep without
Then when you became a teenager although you might still like the toys, if your friends are coming
round you hide them in the cupboard
Because you are becoming somebody else.
Stage by stage through life we become somebody else and somebody else and somebody else.
Our capacity to identify with transient structures is great.
Moreover we are blessed with a capacity for hypocrisy
Which allows us not to see the contradictions between the various positions that we hold.
From the moment you wake up to the time that you go to sleep
You are interacting with different people, showing different faces, speaking with different voices.
This doesn't mean that you're a bad person; it just means that you're being appropriate.
If you're talking to a three year-old child your voice becomes very soft and sweet
While if you're talking with someone at work you are going to have a different tone of voice and use
different grammatical structures.
We have many faces.
We have many voices.
This is the richness of our creativity.
It is this that allows us, as one person, to move in many different directions.
So who are we really?

The teaching of the Buddha indicates that we're not really who we think we are.
The mind itself is not a thing
You can't catch it
You can't define it
Yet it gives rise to ceaseless possibilities of manifestations.
These possibilities are limited by our own self-definition.

This afternoon we went to have lunch in a small restaurant
where some small children were playing around on the floor.
A little girl was showing us how she was learning some yoga.
She was completely unselfconscious.
She had no doubt that we would be fascinated by what she was doing
But perhaps for us life is not so easy
For we have learned to be a bit anxious
"How shall we present ourselves, what will other people make of us..."
We've entered into the grim responsibility of having to manage our identity
"Am I wearing the right clothing for this occasion?"
«Have I saluted people in the proper way according to their rank or stage?"
Life becomes an endless series of problems
Because we worry about what people will think of us.

This points to the fact that we exist as both subject and object.
The small children in the restaurant were still at the stage where they were primarily a subject.
They were interested in the world and they are sure the world is interested in them.

A very small boy came round to tell us that he is going to be a vampire for Halloween
Looking up at us his face conveyed: "I'm telling you an important fact"
We could see, coming right from his feet, right up through him in an unimpeded, uninterrupted way
was the flow of his life.
But for most of us, at some stage in our life, this flow gets interrupted.
Somebody holds up a mirror to us and says: "Look in this mirror, see what I see, see who you are.
You are like this.
You need to think about what you do,
You need to remember to wash you hands, tidy your bed and do your homework"
These messages split us into subject and the object which then
Help the development of our inner life unfolding in the form of a dialogue.
We give ourselves advice
We give ourselves reminders
We criticise what we've done
We feel guilt and shame.
Despite the various voices operating within us
One voice can ignore the other voices and bring us to act in an impulsive way.
We have many different moves that we can make yet each one is likely to hook an appraising
comment.
This commentary about ourselves internally is the internal parallel process of our anxiety about the
commentary that we think other people will make about us and also the commentary we make
through our voice or just in our head about other people.
It's quite a busy business being a human being.

This is what Dharma is about.
It's precisely about understanding why we end up in this state
And how to get out of this state.
It means starting to be able to observe ourselves *in* the process of being ourselves.
The first stage of this is tolerating or accepting that you are as you are.
The idea that you have to correct or improve yourself is unhelpful.
If, as soon as a formation arises inside you, perhaps a jealous or an angry thought,
You think, "*Oh, this is a bad thought*", then you have to do something about it
And you start to get involved in transforming this
Without quite know what it is.
It's very important to know what vegetables taste like when they are raw.
When you cook them the taste is altered, that's obvious.
If you cook your mind, you won't know what it's like raw
The problem is, when we start to see the raw edge of ourself, we think, "Not right! It needs more
salt, more pepper, some chili would improve this..."
But it's a bad cook who has added salt before tasting the sauce.
First you have to taste it.
You have to stay with your mind as it is
Which is hard to do for the mind is already full of recipes and additional ingredients.
When you were small your parents spent many years giving you recipes,
"How to be a proper lady: when you sit down, this is how you cross your legs, be always aware of
how your skirt is."
That is to say, keep an eye on yourself.
If you don't observe yourself in this way you are likely to make a mistake.
Only anxiety will keep you safe.

Now on one level of course this promotion of anxiety is necessary for small children. If they're running on to the road after a ball it's not safe.
But letting go of anxiety is very hard.
When we believe it is helpful
"If I didn't organise myself how would I be?
Just lying in bed all day?"
Lying in bed is
Difficult to do if you have a busy mind.
When people practise yoga they often find that the most difficult of all the asanas is the one the session ends with, the corpse asana
Because in that state you are not asleep,
Yet you're not busy in your mind.
You're alert and present with nothing to do.
Then you feel the underlying pressure and the tension in the body.
While you had some particular asana to do and you were observing your balance and trying to loosen your shoulders while remembering your breath, you still had quite a busy mind
But now you have nothing to do
And that is not very easy.
When we put people in prison
They have nothing to do.
Most people don't enjoy that and so
We call that punishment
"We're going to put you for 8 years in a room with nobody to talk to and nothing to do!"
"But what will I do?"
You start to go crazy.
This tells us something about the human condition:
That we are recreating ourselves moment by moment
That our individual identity exists in a dialog with the people around us.
If we don't get feedback from other people it can be very painful.
Why? Because we need to reach out to others.

Why do we do that?
From the Buddhist point of view it's because we exist within duality
That is to say, we are incomplete in our 'autonomy'.
Some profound tear has occurred
In which we appear to have lost part of ourselves.
We feel a lack and incompleteness inside ourselves.
We find that we say too much or too little
We never seem to quite get it right
And one day tumbles after another.
The years go by and we try our best
But even when we get old we think, "*I'm still not doing it right*"
Life is still complicated.
I'm still faced with these questions, "*How should I live? What should I do?*"

If we keep looking for the answer in the other - that is to say the other side of the dualism – it will never end.

If we expect that we will meet someone and that they will completely fulfil our life so that we have no more problems then we are likely to be disappointed.

Inside our head we chase a thought; we chase a feeling, a sensation, and so on and so on
Yet the thoughts are cheaters.

They appear to be offering something definite, a conclusion

But there is no conclusion.

You put in the full stop

But now it's grown a little tail, it's become a comma!

Done, finished! "*Oh but, hm...*"

This is life, the ceaseless emergence of something new. It doesn't end.

Therefore Dzogchen points out that the mind is unborn and unceasing.

The unborn nature of the mind is that it is essentially open or empty, devoid of inherent self-nature
And the unceasing quality is the ceaseless flow of thought, feelings, sensations, form, shapes colours
and so on.

This doesn't stop.

So if you try to stop something that doesn't stop, this might well be called being stupid.

The pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclites said that,

"You can never step in the same river twice."

Now of course on one level that's not true

Because I can go to the River Thames and step into the water

And come out of the water and step back into it.

It's still the River Thames.

The aspect that is consistent and reliable in this is the name of the river while

The water is always changing.

The fact, the phenomenological fact, is that the river is flow, and is ungraspable.

You cannot stabilise it.

Some of you probably grew up in this town that we're in.

You know the primary school you went to, the streets you went to, where you would play and so on...

And you could say, "I know Granada, this is my city"

It is *your* Granada.

Someone else has a different Granada

"This is ridiculous we could get a map of Spain and see that there is only one Granada!"

But as many people as they are in Granada, there are as many Granadas

Not only that, you have your morning Granada, your midday Granada and your evening Granada

Your good mood Granada, your bad mood Granada

Granada doesn't exist as a single definable reality.

Granada is a name for a system of infinite complexity

As if it were a vast diamond with hundreds of thousands of facets on it.

In Buddhist philosophy there's an image for this called "Indra's net"

And it's described as being a net or a chain of crystals or diamonds each with multiple facets
all linked together stretched in open infinite space.

Each facet of each jewel reflects all the other facets of all the other jewels

Even the street that you live on is changing constantly as people come and go

Offering unique unrepeatable moments, particular configurations, transient events.

Just as a child plays with a kaleidoscope turning it again and again

Our world is turning showing pattern after pattern after pattern.
These patterns arise out of our capacity to organise the infinite complexity of each moment.
The key thing to see is that we are participating in this.
You have your unique experience of the street which is shared by no one else.
You are very important
Because you are co-creating your street

Here we are in this room together
We're all in the same room
But each of us sees something slightly different.
Some people are looking down, some are looking this way, and some people look that way
How your seat is positioned gives you a particular slice of the room,
The actuality of your experience of the room.
Usually we don't pay attention to this as it is too difficult and disturbing.
Much easier to say, "We're all in the same room."
"Does anyone in this room think they're in another room?"
It's not good, we feel worried about you.
Hm, maybe a visit to the doctor is a good idea...
Clearly we're all in the same room!"
This is how we use assumptions to reassure ourselves and help us avoid the difficult work of
attending to the irreducible complexity of the lived moment.
The practice of meditation can
Help us find the way not to keep slipping into our assumptions.
We have developed the habit of taking things for granted and
Pretending to live in exactly the same world as everyone else.
Being on the inside is very important so we develop
A shared way of speaking and thinking which confirms that
"I'm normal I'm not weird, I'm not strange."
The world is startling and amazing
But let us pretend that it is not.

When I was outside on the road I saw a woman, looking maybe mid-sixties, with a man—I guess it
was her father—he was all bent over, with a little frame
And his mouth was a bit anxious.
I was thinking,
"Oh this is your dad, your dad used to be vertical, he was big and strong and he carried you on his
shoulders
Where has your dad gone?"
—He hasn't gone anywhere, he's here.
"Ah, this is my dad.
I love my dad, I love walking with him tonight"
But 'dad' is empty.
'Dad' is like a sausage skin.
The butcher can put all kinds of things into the sausage skin.
The function of the skin is to be empty.
When we use language it's like that.
'Dad' and 'Mum' are changing all the time
But we want them to be the same.

And so continuing to call them 'Mum' and 'Dad'
Through all the changes supports the illusion that
They endure and are always just themselves.
In this way, we blind ourselves
To phenomena as they actually are.
Once you know something you don't look at it so carefully.
You take it for granted.
If you are in an art studio and you're working with a model
You have to look at them again and again.
The eye is going up and down, up and down, between model and paper;
You make a mark and you look again.
We find it quite hard to draw what we see.
It's easier to draw what we imagine.
The actual shape of the tree, or the shoe, or the model's body, is a challenge to our assumption, to
Our ideas about what is there.

Once we recognise what something is, we stop looking
We put what we see into a box of recognition.
We know what we think it is.
We can look and know without actually seeing.
Monet was painting in his garden year after year after year in all the seasons.
He didn't get tired because he saw with fresh eyes
And so what he saw was fresh and new and inspiring.
Usually we mix looking with knowing
We look in order to recognise,
To incorporate the world into our interpretive matrix
While imagining that this composite construct is
Something out there in the world.
If I can add the object to myself as the subject
I will be completed.
But the commodification of the object just leads
To the commodification of the subject, making us even more limited.
The answer doesn't lie in the qualities of the object
It is fresh looking that makes everything fresh.
Usually we tell the world what it is
Which turns the whole world into a manifestation of ourselves
And so we have nothing fresh coming towards us.
If every time somebody gave you food to eat you vomited onto it, before eating
It would be clear that all is not well with you.
Yet that is what we do with our minds.
We vomit our assumptions and prejudices and habits on to the world
So that its fresh potential is hidden from us.

Our idea of what is here becomes more important than what is actually present.
The map is more important than the territory
Then the actual situation of what is here is only relevant if it fits to the map in my head.
We have created a vast complexity of mental interpretations that we feel are supporting us
Yet they actually obscure what is here and who we are.

The knowledge that seems to protect and serve us
Is actually blinding us to the direct simplicity
Of our existence.

We need to move from reliance on representation, on conceptual identifications, towards direct experience.

If you learn to see rather than to project, your own mind will be the great teacher, the guru.

If you buy premade food and put it in the freezer at home

When you take it out and put it in the microwave

It's not likely that the food will be very nourishing

But if you bring home fresh ingredients and prepare them quickly you are more likely to get the full flavour and the full force of the vitamins and minerals and so on.

Similarly if you serve yourself a daily mental diet 'out of the memory freezer – into the impulse microwave – out of my monologic mouth' this is not very helpful.

We are capable of much more than this

We can return to the open fresh enthusiasm of our childhood

It hasn't been lost, it's here as our basic potential.

But it's covered by knowledge.

Meditation is a support for seeing directly without interpreting.

Believing that we are autonomous individuals and that

our lives are entirely up to us it is the sixth we are

So we have the same thing in our mental structure in samsara

It is as if we are cut off from the ground of our being

We've lost touch with the supply chain

And so we keep trying to hang on to whatever we can get

Building up our lives on the basis on the memories.

The past is gone, each moment is fleeting and beyond

Our grasp.

We have to be survivors.

Many people have pictures of people they know in their house

But even if the people whose photo you have are alive

The person in the photo is dead

The photo taken yesterday was a photo of yesterday's person

The person today is not the same.

The photo is a representation a vanished situation.

What it shows is an illusion.

Yet the photo seems to give us something to hold on to

When the actuality of our lives is always changing.

None of us knows how long we'll live

If we live long we don't know if we will be sick or healthy,

We don't know if our friends will grow old with us

Or whether they'll die and leave us very lonely.

Everything which arises is changing and vanishing.

What is there to hold on to?

This is a very important investigation for us each to make.

One way of looking at exploring this is to look at the five elements.
We have earth, water, fire, wind and space.
Earth is stable,
And space is stable, space never moves.
Water, fire, wind and air are constantly moving.
Our mind, in its aspect of the experiences which constitute our life, is movement.
If in your blessed heart the little pump stops moving then the blood will not be moving in your body
and you will be dead
If the lungs aren't going in and out you will be dead
Life is movement
But we think: yes but it's *my* life and it is something.
Yet food and drink have to go in our mouth quite often
And especially air has to come in through the mouth and the nose very frequently.
That is to say, our life is a process of communication
What we take to be the individual is illusory.
Individual means indivisible, undivided, and yet this is the very opposite of our actual situation.
We are subsystems of the world structure in which every system is niched within another system.
We are niched into ecological systems
And changes outside us affect us.
We also have many subsystems within us:
Biological systems,
Hormonal systems and so on
That is to say, 'my body' is a system of messaging.
In similar fashion psychologically
We have self aspects or subpersonalities
Sometimes these aspects of our ourselves are in good communications and sometimes not
For example if you get very angry, it's as if all the energy of your life is being directed through this
small vibrating channel of anger
The bit of you that is angry may feel very big but actually it is just a sub aspect of your self
So it is as if a bit of you has become all of you
Which means you don't see the world clearly.
The other aspects of your self have fallen into abeyance
And are not able to act as breaks on this bit of you that is starting to run away with all of you.

Our sense of self is impermanent
Identity is a co-emergent formation
Our ego, our sense of self is part of the world and so fundamentally
We don't belong to ourselves
The idea that we are autonomous, self-directed agents is an illusion.
We say: "I found myself doing that"
The behaviour had already commenced before we became conscious of it.
We're supposed to be adults, we're in charge of our life
But this is not true.
Due to causes and conditions we find ourselves acting in ways determined
By factors beyond our comprehension and conscious control.
National boundaries change shape as
Countries expand and contract.
This is exactly the same for us, we expand and contract.
We are like an accordion or concertina

Some days we're very expanded, happy and so on, other days we completely close down
We become like this due to causes and conditions which we experience as being outside ourselves
If you tell me that your child is sick I'm not going to laugh
I will be sad, I will be concerned
My mood will have changed
You say one sentence and I'm altered
Without this you couldn't have compassion
Our very volatility is what helps us to be connected to other people
However if you try to concretise your sense of self
Then you set up a contradiction between your sense of yourself as a stable ongoing agent, someone
in charge of their life, and the actuality that we are responding all the time

Going back to the five elements, our being in the world with others is water, fire and wind
And when we have space these elements work well and don't cause too much trouble
We need a bit of the earth element, a bit of stability but not too much
Yet when we get frightened of our instability and
We want to be more substantial, stable and predictable,
We develop the fantasy that we are actually made of the earth element
And then we concretise whatever is occurring and movement seems to be an attack on who and
what we are.
Then you're trapped in a false perception of what is occurring.
If you take water from the tap and you put it in a little container and you put it the freezer you get
little ice cubes
At low temperature the flowing quality of water takes on the aspect of the earth element
This happens to us
When we lose faith with ourselves
When we lose hope, when we lose love, our temperature goes down
In being hurt we retract and become solid.
If we had stayed as water we would have been splashing about for a bit
Then gradually the drops will have come together and life would go on.
"No, that's too much, I'm not putting up with that!"
But if we freeze up then we become locked
"I'm never going to let that happen again."
How?! This is like a child saying "I'm not going to bed!"
We're not in charge
But the ego takes on the fantasy of being stable.
Then all kind of fantasies occur, fantasies of omnipotence that lead to war.
Actually the only way to stay in the flow of life is collaboration
When you collaborate with other people you have to compromise
If you're going to compromise it helps to be not too rigid about what you want before the event
Because if you're sure "this is how it should be", and then you have to discuss it, you are going to
lose the shape that you are committed to.
Much better to melt the ice and let the water flow a little bit.

We have neurotic patterns, we have limited tendencies and we sustain them by acting as if they are
the truth of our existence.
We see that they don't work, but we just try them again, "maybe this time it will be different"

This is why in Buddhism we do something different, we look at the nature of the mind rather than its content.

The mind is like space

It's not a thing

Even our identity, our personality, our ego is not a thing.

These forms are the situational manifesting of the energy of our awareness

And they are always transient.

The idea that "if we become more like earth we will be safe" is very tempting if we have no sense of our actual nature being space

The earth element gives you something to grasp, you can think: "oh yes this glass is stable in space and time, it has a form that doesn't change, this is reliable"

That sounds a better bet than space, for you can grasp it

The central point is that

The one who does the grasping is a patterning of thoughts.

"I'm desperate, I'm lonely, I know things were difficult between us but can't we just meet again? I need something, I need someone..."

If you go for a walk, then you can listen to the birds and the trees and you can relax

If he was an asshole last week, he's going to be an asshole today.

Your loneliness has not transformed this asshole into a lovely guy

Loneliness is not magic, it is tragic.

This is the fact. But when you feel: "I'm desperate"

Your fear, desire, loneliness give rise to the self-abandonment within which we seem to need something to secure us and help us settle.

This is very understandable, it seems obvious, however there are no reliable objects,

To seek for refuge in an object or person is a misapprehension of our life situation.

From the buddhist point of view, ignorance gives rise to grasping and grasping gives rise to suffering.

Ignorance means not directly seeing the spacious ground of our own being

This ground of our being

Is just here you don't have to grasp it as if it were an object.

You simply have to relax into it

Effort and striving won't get it

Our buddha nature is not something you can get, it's not something you can buy, it's not something you can lose

In fact it is already present with us as the basis of our existence

As you reveal yourself to yourself through relaxation

You start to see why grasping is such a problem

"If I get that object, that shiny object which I need, I will be ok"

This is something which seems to be true. It seems obvious

But it's not true. You have to cheat yourself to make it true

You have to tell lies to yourself and pretend that transient objects can bring lasting satisfaction.

We believe that things which don't work can work.

Why do we do that?

Because we're tilted towards arousal and mobilisation

We're not encouraged in this culture to be relaxed, open, passive-receptive.

The fantasy that you can live life on your terms keeps us on the treadmill

Even when we know that it's just a lie.

We are part of the world and we have to work with the conditions which manifest around us and within us

If we are open and sensitive and gentle, that probably helps more than trying to be in control.

Sometimes the other people will win and I will lose.

Losing is not a big problem,

Like the accordion, we function in pulsations of opening and closing, winning and losing

But if you take as a loss or a defeat or a failure as something definitive of your core identity, of who you really are,

then it becomes very problematic,

"How could this happen to me, it shouldn't have happened"

These sorts of thoughts do not help.

If it has happened, you have to work with that.

Having a strong emotional reactions is not going to help you.

Having the most accurate perception of the situation is more likely to help.

And such a perception is more likely if you are relaxed

That's why meditation is so helpful for surviving and thriving in daily life.

Meditation is a way to see more clearly what is possible and what is not possible.

In this world, existing with other people, we cannot make the world safe.

If we're lucky we live in a time when there isn't war.

The tensions that lead to conflict have to be made conscious and thought about and managed.

If you hold onto an intense belief, the only way to maintain the purity of the absolute truth of what you believe is not to speak to other people who don't share your belief.

These unbelievers are the enemies of your sacred truth

And we see this rigidity and rejection occurs everywhere in the world and ensures our ongoing lack of stability.

As the most powerful antidote to this splitting buddhism proposes that wisdom and compassion have to be united in harmonious collaboration as they're like the two wings of a bird.

Wisdom is to see the inherent emptiness of all that manifests in and as the world

While compassion arises out of the sense of the openness of our potential arising from emptiness free of predetermination.

With the clarity that we and other people share the same open ground, we see that we all arise in the same field of clarity.

With this insight we avoid jumping to definitions and conclusions.

We can see how our own mental activity builds up a picture

And on the basis of this construction we

Decide what is going on.

Seeing how we close down it becomes easier to accept

The closed positions adopted by others

Now our clarities starts to dissolve our delusion.

Compassion and generosity are difficult to sustain

Because we don't know how to dissolve our own anxiety

" I want to know how it's going to be"

But we don't know what's going to happen, we just don't know.

So, can we relax into not knowing?

That's a central question.

When we get rigid, when we get anxious we try to concretise and have definite predictable knowledge. This is understandable yet from the buddhist point of view we're going in the wrong direction.

Our rational thoughts alone are not enough to soothe us.

As you're starting to get frightened, saying, "don't worry it will be okay, it will be okay" is not enough.

Because the fear is already moving inside you

This is why we meditate, opening to the awareness which is present *prior* to the arising of anxiety

In the tradition we follow the three stages of studying, reflecting and then meditating

Because the practice is organised around the view, the meditation, the activity and the result,

If the view is not clear, if we have not sufficient study and reflection then entering meditation will not bring clarity.

The view means a way of seeing: we try to see the world in a different way.

We study and reflect to be clear about how to see before we start looking

Otherwise our well-established patterns of selective attention

Will maintain our sense of the world as we know it.

We get used to acting according to habitual structures.

As we looked yesterday it's easier to rely on what you know than to check out the uniqueness of the present situation.

In buddhism we understand that the root of our problems is attachment. Attachment means a fixation of a point of view.

Imagine if you had in your garden, a beautiful sculpture

But you only ever looked at it from one position

It would never be allowed to reveal all of itself to you.

Only by walking around the sculpture do you see the many possible aspects that it has.

Each step you take walking around it, some new patterning of image arises for you.

However if you stay with the fixation of your viewpoint, you will simplify your sense of what is there.

What we need to do, according to dharma, is to ourselves to the complexity of the world.

The only way we can do that without being overwhelmed is to find the simplicity which is present in the complexity

We need to open to the ungraspable radiant mind of the buddha which is the actual clarity of our own mind

The movement of our mind, our thoughts, feelings, sensations, is beyond measure

Only infinity can contain all of the finite without collapsing

By relying on concepts we create a false simplification

Which will let us down in the end.

Generally speaking in buddhism we begin our practice with refuge and bodhicitta.

We take refuge in the buddha/teacher, the dharma teaching and the sangha, the group of practitioners.

We take refuge because we are lost

We have to find something which we can trust, which will return us to ourselves

For example if somebody was in a car crash and had some brain injuries
They might develop amnesia
They don't know who they are
Other people have a sense of who they are
And they will tell the person: oh , this is your name, this is where you live, this is what you do
And the person might say I don't know, I don't know, am I?
Yes, this is who you are!
That is to say they need a mirror to show them who they are because they can't find themselves anymore
That's a very ordinary, dualistic example but it points to something similar in the dharma:
we don't know who we are
We have loads of ideas about who we are
and our friends remind us that our sense of who we are is true
One of the qualities of a friend is that they remember something about us:
So we meet and they say: oh how is you mother I know she was sick, did she get better?
So some aspect of your shape is held in their mind
And when you meet them they remind you of your shape
But that's not your real shape.
That was just a contingent moment in time,
Although it actually occurred, it does not indicate a true definition of who you are.

From that point of view your friends are really your enemies
Because they are confirming for you the fantasy that you have about who you are
Many of the buddhist texts from Tibet indicate that if you want to practice the dharma,
Go to a place where no one knows your name
In that new environment nobody is going to say: hey, didn't you do that two years ago?
They start with a fresh question: "who are you?"
And if you allow this question to go deep it's incredibly useful:
Who am I?
You could say many different things
Each of which will be partially true
I can say I am Scottish
But I don't live in Scotland and I don't want to live in Scotland
So I'm an empty Scottish person
So it's true that I'm Scottish but if you just have that bit information it doesn't give you the whole story
So every time we introduce ourselves, what are we trying to do?
Potentially it's a new beginning
Yesterday is gone
This is potentially the last day of our life
We don't know what will happen
What we shall do, who we shall we be, it's not fixed
When I was standing out at the road a taxi came down the road
And I suddenly thought: oh! I could wave down a taxi get in and go off! Possible!
And then I thought: better not
But it's also possible
In Britain every year thousand of people vanish
They get up in the morning, they have breakfast with their family they get out and never come back
There are huge lists of missing people

What is holding us together in the patterning of our lives
Are networks of threads of connectivity
Some of them are social responsibilities, duties as parents or workers or whatever...
But given that we could die today, how strong are these threads?
Our life is not something fixed, something we possess,
It's a flowing process which is dependent on the factors of maintenance to keep it in place
You do not even know what all these factors are or how long they will operate for.
We walk past the hospital: oh, some other people are in there!
We walk past the cemetery: oh, some other people are in there!
We are not sick, we are not dead
"These things happen to other people"
Not true!
Sickness and death is coming to us
How can this be?
It's very difficult to imagine that we'll die! We are here and how could we not be here, alive, just
being ourselves?

So when your friends tell you reassuring things about knowing who you are
This is a sweet but dangerous lullaby
Because you fall asleep
"I'm just me in my life, it's ok"
But it's not okay, we don't know who we are
We wander around in our stories
Stories which are developed according to the mood of the time we are living in
If you had been born a bit earlier at the time of the war with the republicans and so on, then you
would have different kinds of passions and beliefs
The young people who grow up today
Have the chance to go swimming in the sea, to go walking in the hills... the past is gone
They lived in a different world
The concerns that you had as children have vanished, but some new concerns have arisen for them

This is why we take refuge
To find something which is reliable which is vast and unchanging like the ocean depths
Rather than always being in the flow of the waves on the surface.
This vast depth we see is our own mind which is
Forever undisturbed by the arising and passing of
The thoughts and feelings that are its non-dual self-display.
According to the tradition all beings are asleep
This is why when we do the practice we do it for all beings
We want to include all beings in our commitment to awakening
There are various ways of thinking that help to develop that understanding
For example the thought that we all have been born many times before and
In each life we had a mother and our mothers did so many good things for us and
We have had so many lives that each sentient being who exist now has at one stage been our mother
Therefore when we meet other beings, we begin with a sense of gratitude
If we keep this as our foundation then whatever small irritations
Other people cause to arise in us are really unimportant

For example I get irritated when I 'm walking to work and people are looking in their phones
because they walk very slowly
Because the body is here but their mind is somewhere else
So if I remember: this is my mother, my poor mother is lost
That is more useful than getting pissed off

There are many of these little dharma techniques that we can learn as a kind of lever to shift
ourselves from the self-serving ego position
However the flow of our karmic or habitual reactivity is intense and ongoing
In the traditional example if you want to get rid of a tree,
You could try to kill it by taking off all the leaves
That would take a lot of time
Because as you're removing the leaves on one side,
They're growing more on the other side
Or you could cut off the small branches
Or you could try to saw through the trunk
And each of these approaches that might work
But if you cut the root, the tree will certainly die
So in dharma practice, we try to find what is the root of samsara
When you get angry or jealous or irritated these are leaves
And if you spend your life just trying to organize them, pruning and pruning
At the end of your life you might have a very beautiful bonsai self
But as we know in Japan there are very beautiful bonsai trees
That are five hundred years old,
So pruning doesn't kill!
If we want to cut the root of samsara, we have to find what that root is.

In the first turning of the wheel, when the Buddha gave his first teachings in Sarnath
He outlined the three marks of conditioned existence
Suffering refers to how we get involved with difficulties
Investing in them and building on them.
For example, say you get a sore back
Which reveals itself as sensation
Onto that you can add: poor me
You see other people hurrying down the street you feel you can't for your back is sore
It's the story you're telling your self that make you suffer
The pain comes and goes
But you can sit in your story of suffering all your life
Suffering is essentially an interpretation of an arising and passing experience
Which generates the belief that some permanent harm has occurred.
It has occurred to me, just me, and that is not fair.
In Great Britain in the chronic pain clinics they use meditation
By encouraging people to observe the presenting nature of their pain
They come to see that it is not a continuous phenomenon
Yet the narrative they are caught up in makes it seem continuous.
If we attend to how phenomena actually are, we see that they are not what we have taken them to
be.

Impermanence we have already looked at.

The third factor that marks all phenomena is the absence of inherent self-nature
In the early teachings the buddha presented them primarily in relation to the notion of the person
as an autonomous individual

The perception of a person is actually the construction of the person

From the five skandhas or heaps which are as follows:

Form which is colour and shape;

Sensation or immediate feeling response which is positive, negative or neutral;

Perception which is identificatory and concept based;

Associations which are the way we build up connections to what we are seeing

Linking this moment, this event, to other moments so that we

Invest what happens now with traces of what happened then;

And finally consciousness, which is mental activity formulating a rounded sense of what is
occurring.

Consciousness is our capacity to know something about something

This operates on the basis of our assumption that there is something there which we can know
about.

We are implicated in this process of developing our sense of the object, the other

There is not an objective predefined material world out there

You might be sitting on a nice day at a cafe watching the world go by

It looks like you're not doing anything

You're just watching

But actually you are making that world

If you were not having your perceptions, your interpretations, your responses to what you take to
be there,

What would be happening?

This relates to the traditional question in Indian philosophy: "if a tree falls in a forest, and nobody
hears it fall, does it make a noise?"

A noise is something to hear

Sound exists when you hear it

You might have a concept that there must be a sound, because when a heavy object hits the hard
ground this would generate sound

But the phenomenal actuality of the sound requires a hearer in order to manifest

The world arises that arises

Or you arise with your participation.

We approach the world with our particular movements of construction,

Our ways of patterning the emergent potential

But there is not intrinsic truth in this, it is just one possibility among many.

We are identifying what we see on the basis of our capacity to give identity, separate existence

To appearances by naming and defining them and

Then relating to them as if they were truly what

We have made them to be and now take them to be.

We are creating the world moment by moment.

The world is not self existing, it is not waiting for you 'out there' and you yourself are not separately
existing.

In this life you have already been many different people.

At one time you were living inside your ' ',

Then you came out of that body and
Someone was having to feed you and clean you.
Stage by stage you have been quite different in shape, posture, gestures, way of talking and thinking.
This is actual, you can look at the photos of your history and see that this is true.
But the sense that *I am me* continues through all these changes
As if there is something here, some essence which is continuous.

Yet what is actually occurring is a *repetition* which creates the illusion of continuity
If you're outside in the country and you have a nice fire
On a dark night
You can take a stick out of the fire and swing it around your head
And if you do it fast enough it makes a circle of fire
You've probably seen that
But there is no circle
You hold the stick and
The glowing end is just one point
You move it slowly and the stick is going here to here to here
You speed it up and: oh! there is a circle
It's the same when you go to the cinema
With old-fashioned projectors you have frame after frame
When these are run through the projector at a particular speed, the movement from one frame to
the next
Becomes invisible and there seems to be a continuous flow
But not only that, but we have a tendency to give ourselves to the movie
For the film to offer itself to us we have to be open and available,
We have to allow ourselves to be taken in by it.
Aristotle described this as being the necessary condition for theater;
That you have to suspend your disbelief
And enter into the joint creation.
You go to the cinema knowing it is based on projection onto a white screen
But then, magically, you find yourself caught up in the film.
You go to the theater and you know these are paid actors coming on to the stage
But you give yourself into the dynamic of the drama
You believe that something is happening which is not happening and
Yet it is truly happening in and as your experience
This is not difficult to achieve, yet it is.
Amazing
The reason we can enter this fantasy is because we do it all the time.
Our world and ourselves within it arise
As the play of our active imagination
You put the pieces of Lego together, and it's a boat!
There is no boat.
The actors are being paid money to pretend to be who they are not.
They deceive us and we like it.
We want to give ourselves to illusion and make it seem real for us.
Yet the Buddha says that the whole world is like an illusion devoid of even an atom's worth of
reality
We give ourselves to a particular construction and believe it to be truly existing
Not only that, having co-created this image we then forget that we have created it

And believe that it exists in and of itself.
We trust our narrative about ourselves and each other and each appearance
Yet there is no essence or defining substance in anything.
This is quite frightening to our ego sense
In our anxiety we might think: "but who I am?"
Well, that's undecided,
That's open to possibilities
You can become many people
"But I just want to be *me*!"
Just "being me" is the one thing you can't be
You will have to be "me" for this moment, this context
And that me is certainly not your only me.
We are multiple and indefinable and yet
Just who I am for me in this moment
Identity is an experience not an essence.

This is our human condition
If we want to be ourselves in a defined and enduring way
This will involve the sacrifice of all the other possibilities we can manifest
This seemingly consistent reliable me comes at a great price,
At the cost of self-deceit
Do your emotions change in the day, do your thoughts change, do your sensations changes?
If the answer is yes, then where is this self substance that we are protecting?
It exists only as an illusion.

For example I'm going to retire from my work in the hospital
I was going to do it this summer but I delayed it
Because I started to see: "oh, this is quite important in my life, I have worked there a long time"
So I want to do it slowly and carefully
I'm emptying out all my papers from the filing cabinets
And I'm trying to take my projections out of the building.
There is "my room" with "my" name on the door
And when I'll leave my name will come off the door
And someone else will be in "my" room
And sit in "my" chair
And the chair will have a brief moment of just being a chair before it becomes owned by someone else.
When you get on the train
You look for a seat, you sit down, and in one second this becomes "your" seat
As the train goes on and on, you get up, you go to the toilet to have a pee, you come back: someone is in your seat!
You say: "Excuse me I'm sitting here"
He says "Oh I'm sorry I didn't see you!"
"No I was in the toilet. But it's *my* seat, I got used to sit in there!"
If the person is rude he'll say: "Oh but why don't you go and sit over there?"
You might go and sit over there
But it does not feel right, This is not the seat where I should be, and that's MY seat!...
This is very interesting to observe:

We invest it with a sense of being an extension of myself.
Our attachment transforms the randomly selected seat into my seat.

In meditation we're not trying to stop thoughts
We're trying to diminish our reactivity to the thoughts that arise
Thoughts are not the enemy
It's very helpful to be able to think
When thinking is required.
The problem is with thoughts that seem to take on a life of their own,
Which operate as habit formation
And seem to speak a truth which cannot be resisted.
For example if you smoke cigarettes you might have a thought: "I need a cigarette"
But you don't need a cigarette
But do you actually need a cigarette?
Do your lungs need a cigarette? Are they in a hurry to get cancer?
Does your throat need a cigarette?
Is it in a hurry to get a hot smoke poured over it?
Which bit of you has the need?
The thought, "I want a cigarette" is the site of wanting a cigarette.
The thought arises "I need a cigarette" and it just seems to be true
And if you believe it and merge into this thought then you light a cigarette.
You might briefly feel better
Because you have given yourself something you felt you needed
Similarly, in the break I was offered a little biscuit
I didn't need that biscuit
But I had never eaten that particular kind of biscuit before
And in was presented in a nice box
So I thought: "time for a new adventure" so I ate the biscuit
I'm heavy enough to not need to eat biscuits
But the thought arose: "Why not?" And I went with the thought
It's like that
The thought was unhelpful
But it has power.
We need to participate in life since we are human beings, a sociable species
That entails being available
Available, without being lost.

In Buddhism emptiness is the great resource for participating without getting lost
It's not something mystical
Sometimes the way it's talked about, it's as if it's turned into a special eternal substance
Like a soul or something like that
It's the very opposite of this
When Nagarjuna was explaining emptiness he took the *via negativa*
He put into question all the propositions made by other teachers
Saying: not this, not this
Whatever is established is a proposition
If you believe that proposition, then you sit inside it and it seems to be true
This functions in a psychological manner, as a conviction for

You cannot objectively know whether it is really true or not.
Nagarjuna avoided making his own propositions
He strove for the freshness of free enquiry
Rather than the cosy fog of assumptions.
Impermanence is available for us to observe:
All forms that are established are transient since they lack
Their own validation.
Forms, structures, creatures arise due to causes and
Are maintained for their duration by other factors.
They are not self-existing and are in fact devoid of
Self essence. They arise in dependency
With other arising factors and so are empty of fixed and defining self.
For example, my watch is made up of many moving parts
It has a battery inside.
Every now and then the battery starts to run down, and I need to get a new battery.
The battery sends the little pulse that keeps the wheels moving.
All of this activity is going on yet we just see a watch. A watch is a watch.
The watch is a conclusion, an end product that seems to have arrived at independent existence.
The clarity of this understanding is the dark light delusion.
If you give a watch to a two year old child, they will bang it
Because if you are two years of age, things are for banging
Then you say "Hey, don't do that with the watch!"
The child is amazed: to them the watch is obviously for banging, everything is for banging or biting!
1'03
We *learn* this is a watch
We *learn* that they can break
We *learn* that they cost money
All of these ideas which we have learned to activate, we put in to the watch
As if such qualities were intrinsic and not attributed.
The watchness of the watch is not in the watch, it's in your mind

If your mind had not been trained to function with what we take to be a watch, you wouldn't be able to make use of the watch.
Each culture has its own constructs
We might believe that the constructs of our culture are correct, but maybe they're not
For these are belief systems, systems of interpretation.
They are projections. We put the meaning *into* what we encounter.
It's wonderful that we have good writers who make interesting novels
We buy their books but the books themselves don't do anything
You have to bring your mind to the book
It's your mind that makes the book shine
The book reveals itself to you by your participation in the potential of the book
What arises for you is unique to you
When you read you read *your* book
The book is not self-existing as a closed, finished entity
Its meaning is not *in* it like food in the fridge
The book is half of a bridge
Your mind is the other half of the bridge
Once the bridge is in place, meaning can go across in both directions

How you build your bit of the bridge will influence how much weight you can put onto it
Emptiness is the indeterminacy of the potential of the book,
The house, the cat
All phenomena reveal themselves in a momentary particularity
As you engage with them in the specific moment.
I remember when I was at school and studying English
We had to prepare four plays by Shakespeare for the final exam
We read various commentaries on the plays
I asked to the teacher: "why are there so many commentaries, why doesn't somebody just tell me
what it means?"
She explained: "well, that's because the play has no definitive meaning.
The text is like Sleeping Beauty, awaiting the kiss of
Your interest in order to awaken to vibrant life.
it doesn't really mean anything.
In the exam you have to show that you know that there are different interpretations possible."
With this kind of experience in school you go from being a child to being an adult
You are introduced to the indeterminacy and not-yet-formedness
Of the adult world in which we encounter complexity
which resists simple, reductive, solutions
Life is beyond totalisation
Life is beyond arithmetic – It doesn't all add up!

The Buddha's teaching is the middle way between the extremes
One extreme is eternalism
Which would be basically a materialistic view: matter is neither created nor destroyed.
Therefore there is an enduring substance, a substantial basis to the world
The other extreme is a nihilistic one proposing that nothing at all remains,
And that there is no consequences to action
With this view there is no karma, no ethical basis to the world; when something ends it leaves no
trace in the world
Dharma teaches that there is no personal defining essence in anything. This doesn't mean that there
is nothing at all.
Emptiness means there is nothing which is intrinsically or essentially defined by factors solely
residing in itself. There is no internal essence defining anything
Each appearance manifests from the potential of the mind
And carries with it a potential for many diverse
Interpretations and uses
These interpretations and values and usages are the
Generosity of the heart of the Buddha which is always
Present in our own mind.

The heart of the Buddha is not found by exploring and
Analysing all the possible usages of phenomena
It is not revealed by trying to extract more
And more value from the 'things' we encounter.
The heart of the Buddha, our own heart or ground
Is found by opening to the source, by allowing
Whatever arises to pass, flowing through the space of the mind

The more we do not interfere with the flow
The more the basic space of the mind,
The generous displaying loving heart of the Buddha
Is our own undeniable source, the truth of who we are.

The richness of the potential is in the house of compassion, not
the house of wisdom for that abides in the open ground.
The variety arising from the potential is the basis for communication with other people
empathically adapting
To meet them where they are.

When you see a rainbow, you see it, yet
There is nothing there. You can't grasp it,
But it's there.
The reflection of the moon on water
Is ungraspable yet visible right here.
Driving in the summer you see the water glittering on the road
It's not there but it is there.
The mirage is an illusion.
Emptiness is inseparable from what manifests.
This is the illusory nature of all phenomena.
Emptiness allows all the possibilities of conductivity.
To awaken to emptiness is wisdom.
To manifest as its display is compassion.

In the teachings of Dzogchen, it says there is one ground and two paths
The one ground is the empty nature of the mind
The two paths are Samsara and Nirvana
If you see the empty nature, you are in peace
And therefore all your energy can be for compassion
If you don't see this empty nature
You're wrapped into your individual sense of self
Then you want people to like you
And you feel unhappy when people don't like you
If you want to be happy but don't want to be sad
Then you're not at peace
Because the world is changing moment by moment
And you constantly have to manage your position to make sure the bad things don't arrive, and the
good things don't leave you
Then compassion is restricted for your family and a few friends
It's not really compassion because it's self referential

My teacher used to say: "there is no virtue in the family"
Taking care of your children is not a virtuous act
It's just what you should do
Taking care of a stranger, that is the beginning of virtue

So this buddhist view point is rather different from the normal western way of understanding the world

"The truth cannot be said."

How could so many millions of people come into a belief system where you can't say what you believe?!

Emptiness is not a thing. It can't be grasped. And it can't be known as an object.

It is self-luminous, self-illuminating as awareness is present everywhere.

Emptiness itself is inseparable from transcendental wisdom

One manifestation of this non-dual wisdom is the Goddess, Prajna Paramita

She is called the Great Mother because she is the Mother of all the Buddhas.

You become a human being by coming into existence in your mother's womb

And then being born out of her body.

You become a buddha by being born in the womb of emptiness

Which you know see that you have never left.

Prajna Paramita is beyond speech, thought and expression

There's no way of showing this to someone else. There is nothing to point to

Yet it is always already present.

If somebody doesn't know what the word "sweet" means

You can try to explain what that is

But even after thousands of words, the person will lack direct understanding

Yet if you take a small spoon of honey and put it on their tongue

Immediately they know "this is sweet"

You say: "now you know what sweet is, tell me"

They can tell you all kinds of words, but none of these word can say precisely what it is

That is to say sweetness is a direct experience

It's not a concept. It is not arrived at or opened to by talking about it.

Because of phenomena, all that ever occurs

Anywhere, at any time,

Are without internal stabilizing essence

But arise interdependently with other phenomena,

All phenomena are impermanent:

Arising due to causes and conditions

Remaining due to causes and conditions

Vanishing due to causes and conditions

Due to this we are unpredictable and unreliable.

Children around their birthday

Say: "Oh, this is what I need to get for my birthday."

You say: are you sure?

Yes, yes

Then you find them the little guitar, or the skates or whatever it is

And for the first week, every day, they play...

After a month you say "hey you're not using it anymore..."

"No...." The most important item is now not important

In their bedroom there are so many toys

Yet they say "I've nothing to play with"

This is emptiness

The child had the idea that "this is what I want"
The idea was blown up like a balloon
But once you get the special thing, you find that the idea of the thing and the actual thing are not the same
And the energy goes out of the actual item.
In fact it was only shining at first because it was carrying the projected image of the fantasy item.
This created an illusion
It doesn't mean that there was nothing of value
But it was there as a construct that was invested with meaning
And then the investment comes apart from the object
People meet and fall in love and the other person becomes very special
But after a while the feeling changes
Where did that feeling go?
It was a feeling, feelings are impermanent
"But I thought you loved me"
"I did – past tense."
"You said you would always love me!"
"I'm sorry"
"Why did you stop loving me?"
I don't know."
This is the life of the emotions.
It's not that a person is lying or cheating on purpose
They're caught up in a pattern of energy which seems so powerfully true
And so they act on the basis of it
But it then dissolves leaving confusion in its track.
This is because there is no self-defining essence in anything.
This can bring a kind of pragmatism into the world
I remember my teacher often saying: "there is nothing special"
I remember we were in Calcutta once and we stopped in a little cafe
The waiter asked: "do you want special coffee?"
So he said: "What's special about your coffee, it's just coffee!"
It's like that, nothing is special. It's our mind that makes it special.
Everything is empty
We say: this is good, this is bad
For the vegan eating meat is disgusting
For the meat eater eating soya and tofu is not so great.
The value is attributed, not intrinsic!

When I was in Nepal
I was in a small retreat place where were two Tibetan monks
We were doing some building and meditating and so on
And they got on very well and I asked: "how long have you being friends?"
And one said: "we're not friends, we're friendly"
This was very helpful for me because I was feeling lonely
I wanted friends
Yet friendly is better.
Once you say: "My friend, my special friend" you are creating bias and investment, and suffering will follow.
"Friends" become "enemies"

Being in a group means "other groups"
Whereas being friendly is something you can be to everyone
Then nobody is special
"But I'm special to you, amn't I?" "I thought I was the one"
We have built a whole culture in Europe on romantic love, my one true love.
There are many theories about the development of romantic love
One idea is that it developed in the south of France, in Aquitaine with the troubadours
Who composed very passionate songs to their unavailable love, the wife of their master.
It was the fact that she was unavailable that made the longing so intense
The troubadours had been in the Holy Land with the crusaders
Where they had heard the Sufi songs.
In Sufi tradition they sing to God as the Beloved
"Take this veil from your face, how I yearn to see you."
So what was originally a sacred openness to the infinity of the divine,
Became after a few hundred years a message people were saying to other human beings:
"You are the meaning of my life"
This gives a big responsibility to the other:
"My life is resting on you, so you'd better behave!"
"You can break my heart so easily, so walk on eggshells"
It's a kind of madness to project the meaning of one's existence onto an other so that we become
hypersensitive to everything that they do.
If we look in the wrong place, how will we find fulfilment?

We are complete already, complete even before we were born.
Each sentient being has been complete from the very beginningless beginning.
Dzogchen means "the great completion"
Due to not attending to our own ground we find ourselves wrapped in this transient identity
As if it were the total truth of who we are.
Because of that we are always busy looking for the answer outside of ourselves
And so we are disappointed again and again
It not that other people are bad or are setting out to harm us
We may be lucky and find people to really love and take care of us
Yet somehow it's never quite enough
There's some kind of lack or dissatisfaction
This is because we are looking in the wrong place to find the satisfaction of completion.
The paradox is that the more you are present with your mind and find out how it is, the more kind
and loving you can be.

Garab Dorje introduced the dzogchen teachings into the human realm through his three statements:
The first is to be introduced to, or wake up to, how your mind is.
The second is to settle in this and not remain in doubt about it.
And the third is to continue with that awakening without seeking anything else.
To be introduced to our own mind as it actually is
Gives you the map and the orientation
Which permits you to not be captured by
Thoughts and feelings
Now you can attend to the source, the ground of these thoughts and feelings

With this directly, non-conceptually
 You awaken to the open mind, primordial awareness.
 This mind, your mind, has been empty, clear,
 Luminous and effortlessly present always and forever.
 It is not made by thinking or by activity. It simply is.
 The one stopping you awakening to yourself is yourself.
 The ego self attaches itself to objects in order to fill itself
 And this attachment activity is continuous, as a battle
 Against the fact of impermanence.
 We are so busy maintaining the delusion that
 Life is what we think it is that we have no time
 To be present to the basic, simple, intrinsic actuality.
 None of these misleading thoughts is
 The mind as it is in itself
 But they are the radiance, the energy of the mind
 They are how our mind shows itself
 As the creativity of our ongoing capacity of displaying different thoughts, feelings and ideas
 On one level we are *not* an idea
 And no idea will ever take us to who we truly are
 And yet simultaneously we are the ceaseless flow of ideas.

A traditional example used to illustrate this is to consider a mirror
 When you look in a mirror, you see your face in the mirror
 You're not actually in the mirror
 The reflection is in the mirror
 Yet the reflection is not the mirror
 If the reflection was truly in the mirror as the expression of the mirror
 Then the mirror would be defined by a particular reflection.
 For example on the wall over there is a picture
 Of some children working together on a project around the table
 As soon as we see what the picture shows, what is involved in it, we have the picture
 The potential that was there in the paper before this was printed on it is gone.
 You could try to rub this out of the picture but it has strong colours and
 So probably you would just make a hole in the paper
 So in this way you can see that the paper is now defined by the image it carries.
 But mirrors are not like that
 When you look in the mirror, maybe in the toilet, you see yourself.
 Imagine if the next person came up to the mirror and saw your reflection still in it
 Maybe they would say to you "when you finish in the toilet, flush it and
 When you finish with the mirror flush that too!"
 However this is not necessary, since when you go, the reflection vanishes by itself.
 When the reflection was in the mirror, it is as if it was the mirror
 You cannot see the mirror itself
 The mirror shows itself through the reflection
 Which is in it but not it
 The shape of the reflection doesn't define the essence of the mirror
 What the particular reflection tells us is: this is a mirror because it has the capacity, the potential to
 show images
 But the particular image which is in it at the moment in no way defines the mirror.

So, think of your own mind;
Some particular patterning of thoughts and feelings arises
It feels like you
"My mind is showing me who I am"
This is our ordinary understanding
However if you hold the image of the mirror
"My mind is showing me its capacity to generate thoughts, feelings, sensations, that is to say
experience, through showing *this* particular experience
This experience indicates that my mind is shining.
Each thought tells you about your capacity to have thought.
You might think "I'm stupid, I can't understand this." That's just a thought.
The radiance of your mind is demonstrated in the thought that you are stupid
You are having an experience
Something is happening
You're alive
This is the play of subject and object in the mirror of the mind.
When you feel depressed or tired or in pain or sad or confused or happy or excited,
If you enter into a judgment, an evaluation about these feelings
You start to build up a narrative account of yourself,
A conclusion about how you are.

However you can just observe that this is arising and passing, that is arising and passing.
If you imagine a mirror on the side of your car, as you drive around the city, thousands and
thousands of impressions are arising and passing in it
In the same way, in the course of the day, so many thoughts and feelings are arising and passing in
your mind
The mistake we make is to stand in relation to the image
As something other than our own clarity
We enter into a series of thoughts, thoughts about thoughts
As with the picture on the wall you're taking the current arising in your mind
To be a true account of who you are
But this thought is vanishing as it arises
The nature of my mind is open and empty
And full and radiant
It is not that thoughts and feelings and so on
Are coming into my mind from somewhere else
All that arises in the mind is the display of
The radiant potential of the mind
The specific patterns which arise moment by moment
Are contingent, not defined by fixed templates
Wisdom is to see the absence of self-essence in whatever occurs.
Compassion is the ceaseless co-emergence manifesting
The non-duality of self and other.
The mirror is always empty, if the mirror wasn't empty, it couldn't be full
Of different images again and again
This fertile always fullness is different from
The painting's sterile unchanging way of being full of just one image.

A thought arises in your mind
If you look at it like a painting, like an x-ray of yourself,
The fact that you have this kind of thought shows you what kind of a person you are.
But then the thought is gone!
The thought showed you the infinity of your mind as being able to show this thought and then many others.
"But who I am then?"
No final definition of self is arrived at through the fleeting contents of the mind.

If you want to get a definite notion of who you are, something
You can hang on to, you have to tell yourself a lie.
It's the only way to do it
We ignore how life actually is and
Then imagine how it is not
Relying on thoughts taken as messengers of
A putative 'real'
We deceive ourselves and remain blind
To the radiant ground of our being
This is how Samsara unfolds,
By the false interpretation of what is going on.
Thoughts are impermanent and arise due to complex interactions of causes and conditions.
They have no defining truth in them and they invent rather than describe what is occurring.
If you believe in them, if you hold on to them,
They will create for you a particular kind of fantasy
A particular kind of illusion
We rely on defining conclusions about ourselves and others:
"I'm not good at mathematics", or "John's not good at music"
These conclusions blind us to our potential,
We settle into our imagined limitations
We loose heart
"Why would I try to do something that I'm not good at
Surely it's better to do more of what I'm good at!"
Yet of course we need to do more of what we're not good at
Because that is the only way to dissolve the false limit
All limits are relative, situational not essential or absolute.
They are patterns of energy devoid of self-substance
They are illusory like rainbows
Yet and belief in them can turn them into a prison.
The purity of the mind is intrinsic and is not created by purification
It is impossible for the mind to be dirty
If you hold the mirror up onto something that is very ugly
The mirror will show an ugly reflection
But the mirror has not itself become ugly
When you develop a neurotic identification of your self
Full of anxiety, depression, self-doubt and so on
This is a construct, an artifice, a play of energy, evanescent and unreliable.
Yet if such a thought or mood comes to visit you, perhaps when you're very tired or sad
Each time it arise it is as if it were the continuity of the same old story: "I'm not good at these things,
people don't like me, I don't seem to be able to make friends", whatever it would be...

But this never-ending story is actually being newborn in this moment
By your belief in it.
It's in the mind
But it's not the truth of the mind.

Once we develop a storyline about ourselves or about other people
We tend to be very biased in the way that we go about gathering information
Because we want to confirm the truth of what we've already decided is the case
This is something we have to be aware of
These story lines, these contents of our mind, are not self-existing
They're not there from the very beginning
They have arisen in time due to causes and circumstances and will soon be gone
Like reflections, they arise in time due to causes and conditions, how events arise for you.
The mind is naked
It is not covered with anything
It manifests many different images but they do not cover the mind.
The mind is intrinsically empty
You cannot find even an atom of real substance in it
And so there is nothing which might be covered.

Sometimes the purity of the mind, the radiance of the mind, rigpa, is described as being like the sun
We hear that this is the truth of our mind
But it doesn't feel like that to us
We try to look for ourselves as we are but all we see is the obscuration created by our own thoughts
Just as some days you look up to try to see the sun but you just see clouds
It is as if the sun is hidden by the clouds
But the sun is only hidden by the clouds if you are on the other side of the clouds
We are the sun
Each of us is alive and present and your shining mind is showing you your world
This basic illuminating power is present prior to thought
But because we are so used to using thoughts as a true means to illuminate the truth of existence
The thought which is the radiance of our mind, the fruit or the blossoming of our mind
Becomes the opaque, cloudy method of on-going self-deception.
All these thoughts, feeling, sensations, are your mind at play.
"Yes but who I am?
I want to get to the real thought
I want to get to the real thing"
But when you look in that way, the thoughts the radiant play manifests as
An obscuration that stands in the way
This is the great tragedy of samsara,
We are blinded by the light
When it seems to be coming at us
Rather than radiation from us, as us
Light then arises as appearances made substantial
By our own belief in and reliance on them.
The illusory playful expressions of the Ever-open mind
Manifest as enchanting delusions which bind
Us into reactivity within the never-ceasing

Flow of reified imaginings.
Our present, actual awareness, open and empty,
Is the ground of our potential, of all our experience
If we open to this we find the end of searching.
Whatever the particular content of your experience
There is experience
Who is the experiencer?
Finding the experiencer brings us into the center of our being, our presence
Thinking *about* who is the experiencer takes us into further alienation
The mind is raw,
not processed
Nothing has been done to it
It has not changed from the beginningless beginning,
No event that has occurred has altered it in any way
It doesn't need anything added to it or subtracted from it
But thoughts, feelings, memories, plans are not like this
Any thought you have could be acted on, transformed
You could elaborate the thought, make more of it
Or you might you want to trim it and make it more compact
Or place it with another thought that would complement it
Thoughts need other thoughts
Thoughts on their own don't take you very far
Communication is about chains of signification
If I say: "I"
You're waiting for something else to be said
"I am..."
"yeah, and, what is it you are?"
-I am tired.
-Oh, ok"
Then the other person's mind can relax
But with just I am, they are a little bit unsettled
We want completion of this construct.
We want solid bits of information to build up our Lego self as a composite picture
For example many people find it very difficult to be with a small baby
Because when the baby is upset they can't tell you what's the matter
You might have to rock it or sing to it, but it still might not settle
Eventually you go to the hospital and say "What's the matter with my baby"
And they say, nothing very much, just some wind, you need to do this and this
And you say "oh thank God!"
Because now you know
"Such a relief to know
Now I know what to do
But before you didn't know and that was awful"
We want a rounded picture, a definite conclusion
For this strengthens our sense of competence and control.
Knowledge gives shape to experience. And even if it is painful,
Well at least I know.
In meditation returned towards the unmediated non-conceptual openness to the floor of occurrence
however irritates
We may experience many strange things

The mind jumps from one thing to an other
It's not coherent
Odd thoughts arise
Our tendency is to want to examine the thought
To work out what it means.
But this is thoughts chasing thoughts and
Will take us far from the direct openness of meditation.

When you sit in meditation sometimes you're happy, sometimes you're sad,
Sometimes you're clear, sometimes you're completely dull and sinking.
The mind is naked and complete
It requires nothing from our deluded ego self.
"But it shouldn't be like this, I don't like it."
This is the false map of the self-referential small ego
The mind is as the mind is.
Opening to unborn openness will give us
All that we truly need and
With this intrinsic integrative completion
We rest in sentiment and satisfaction,
At ease and at peace.

In the higher tantras, for example, offerings are made to the Buddha of things that would normally be considered disgusting:
Dog flesh, human flesh, shit, piss, blood and so on.
This is horrible
"The Buddha is very nice, why do you offer this to the Buddha?"
Because the Buddha is not a nice man
The Buddha is not a man, not a woman.
The Buddha is awake, free of lies, free of prejudice.
If you don't think shit is good, try being constipated for a month
Regular evacuation of your shit is very good
Our ego self says: "this is good, this is bad, I like this, I don't like that"
"I am in charge and I want the world to be the way I want it"
The ego and the Buddha nature are not the same.
The ego is the delinquent child of the Buddha nature.
When children lose contact with their parents, maybe in a big shopping centre,
They become very anxious and upset
They start crying and they're incoherent
Our ego is the part of ourself which has lost contact with its own ground
And it tries to reassure itself by being in control
And gaining definite knowledge
However the name of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra means "Always good"
Everything is good
Every reflection is pure in itself however it appears to our judgments and preferences.
If you think of a mirror, nothing in it is actually horrible
Because there is nothing in the mirror, only
Reflections having no substance, no inherent self-defining essence
So when you say "oh that's horrible!" *You* have put the essence in the reflection.

You have made it very real. *You* are persecuting yourself with your own projections
It's only a reflection.

One of my teacher called Chatral Rinpoche
When I asked him: what is enlightenment?
Said: well, there are two brothers and they are lying in the same bed
One is asleep experiencing a nightmare and one is awake
The one who is awake awakens his brother.
When the brother awakens he's free of the nightmare
And he is where he has always been: safe in bed.
Because of the nightmare he was frightened and shaking
Frightened and shaking while being safe in his own bed!

This is our situation.
We are not other than our radiant awareness
But by thinking about and what is going on
We are pulled this way and that by transient ideas
And so we frighten ourselves
Trying to think our way out our addiction to reified ideas
Will not bring us to freedom in our own awakening
The mind itself is pure, we don't have to *make* ourselves pure.

We can also practise disrupting the flow of thoughts.
We do this with the confidence that being free of the chain of thoughts is better than being bound in
the chain of thoughts.
If you could knock a hole in the clouds on a very grey day
Then, even if only for a minute,
You will see the blue sky: "oh, it's still there!"
When the clouds come back you *know* the clouds are in the sky and yet the sky is still open
But if you only see cloud after cloud after cloud and nothing else
You inhabit a very small limited world with no sense of anything different.
We begin sitting with a focus on the breath
And if you find yourself caught up in the thought
Instead of bringing your attention back to the breath
Which is a practice of recollection and repair
We go in the other direction and disrupt the sequence of thoughts.
We do this by making the sound of "Phat!"
Let the sound arise from deep in your belly straight through your throat and
Explode out of your head driving all thoughts ahead of it.
Imagine that these thoughts are coming to steal your life.
Day after day we are wrapped in thoughts
Day after day, like someone in a prison, we see a small window and imagine the world outside.
"The walls of the prison are my enemy,
These thoughts are my enemies
I want to get rid of them"
It is kill or be killed, freedom or slavery.
In this way desire for freedom and fear of enslavement

Are harnessed in the service of dharma. Phat!
Shocked open. Hedewa! Everything is gone all at once.
Nothing to cling to but also no one to do the clinging
Then stay relaxed and present in infinite openness.
The very energetic Phat! brings us to peace and calm without limit.
We sound Phat! and then observe what is here.
There's nothing wrong with thoughts, we're not trying to get rid of them forever.
It is our reliance on thoughts that is the problem,
our misuse of them to create and maintain our sense
Of being a separate independent self.

We're using "Phat!" to open a space in the flow of experience
So we are directly in touch with the sky-like mind
Then when thoughts arise again they're arising *in* the sky
The task at that moment is to relax and stay open *with* the arising of the thought
The thought is not stealing the openness of the mind
It is the showing of the potential of the mind
Which is able to show itself precisely because the mind is empty
The mirror has no content of its own
The painting has a content
The painting is its content
But the mind is like a mirror, not like a painting
When you're a child and some big person shames you
then it's as if they have turned you into a painting
You're objectified
You're reduced to a particular definition
"You're noisy, you're a nuisance, I wish you hadn't been born"
The child is overwhelmed by the definition
Their freedom and playful flexibility has been frozen
Children are just like the mirror, constantly creative, with new patterns arising and passing...

The mind itself, our mind as it is in itself,
The basis of our existence here and now, is pure.
Pure from the very beginning, naturally complete and not lacking anything
Our mind is infinite; it has no beginning and no end
It is difficult to run an import agency in infinity!
Where would you your supplies from?
You're country is infinite
It has no border, no limit
There is nothing outside it
Where will stuff come from?
It comes from inside
Everything is always already inside your mind
Everyone here is in your mind.
Each of us has our own unique experience.
Each of us is the center of the universe as it appears to us.
This is not a narcissistic, egotistic fantasy
It is how the world is when we let it show itself.

There is not an objective clearly defined world out there
The world is experience
When we sit relaxed in the open space of awareness
Everything arises as experience
Experience is the Buddha's middle way:
Things are not truly existing in themselves
Yet neither is there nothing at all
What we have is experience moment by moment by moment
The self expression or the self experience or self revealing of awareness itself
This is amazing
Everything you see is the radiance of your own unborn mind
We live in ceaseless wonder at the amazing complexity and
Richness of this ever-changing kaleidoscope
We have to trust in the unchanging givenness of this
This is the Garab Dorje's second point, "not to remain in doubt", not to think about it, not to consider
it from the outside
Again and again we relax and settle in openness
Then we continue in this mode and fulfil Garab Dorje's third point.

Each of us reveals ourselves to ourselves and to others
We don't reveal ourselves to others having first of all worked out who we are
As we speak we hear ourselves speaking and
That's how we know what we think
If you had to think about everything you were going to say, you would never speak.
What I say and how I describe myself is a transient formation
Which arises in this particular form in this particular moment according to the situation
So we pay attention to the anxiety which brings the restriction or closure of our potential, and
Then relax and release.

You are my experience
When I look I see you, I don't see myself.
You are what I get.
So why would I be horrible to you?
This is obvious and yet it is not.

We are moving in space, we are the movement of unmoving space.
Moving in space with others who are also moving in space
You can move with grace, with poise, with balance
Not invading other people
Not abandoning other people
But being here with them.
Our capacity to be available and contented is determined by our openness
The practice of meditation is to open to allow self-referential mobilisation to relax.
Our infinity, our openness is the fundamental basis of our generosity
There will always be more
Our mind is unborn and unceasing
Because it's unborn you can't catch it

Yet because it is unceasing there is no end to the flow of experience.
 The is the inexhaustible compassion of all the Buddhas.
 When the spin of life's energy which arises from self-centered ego
 Is relaxed, everything flows free.
 On the banks of the river indentations form little pools
 Where the trapped current goes round and round
 Carrying little leaves with it.
 Our ego-self is just like one of these pools
 Connected to, yet cut off from, the main flow.
 We are the water of life, bubbling this way and that way moment by moment,
 Yet due to our own thought constructions we can easily get caught and go round and round in
 repetitive thoughts and behaviours
 The more we open, the more these little whirlpools are inseparable from the main flow.

In this way every aspect of ourselves and our world
 Is welcomed and integrated in the flow of life
 This includes our selfishness our anger, our jealousy, pride and so on
 To include them means we acknowledge: "oh, this is part of me"
 When we allow these aspects to be part of us they take their own place,
 Neither too big nor too small
 Sometimes it's helpful to be angry.
 Sometimes a degree of pride can be useful.
 For example in the tantric tradition there are four activities in the mandala: pacifying, increasing,
 overawing and destroying.
 Overawing means to be present in your dignity,
 Fully inhabiting your own skin
 There is pride in who I am
 Not the pride of: "I'm better than you"
 Being fully at home in myself and my world as it unfolds
 I am freed from the anxiety and competition
 Of comparing and contrasting.
 When isolated self-aspects are welcomed they cease to cause trouble.
 For example, Milarepa describes how he was once living in a cave in retreat
 But when he was trying to do his practice and when he was sleeping he was being disturbed by local
 gods and demons
 He tried doing some practices to drive them away
 For he was already a very powerful yogi
 But it didn't work and he became even more troubled.
 Then one day he thought: "You local gods and demons were here in this cave before me... Thank you
 very much for sharing the space with me. I'm sorry if anything I am doing is disturbing you. Could
 we live together?"
 Then life became very peaceful.
 So it's exactly with this principle that we share space in ourselves
 With aspects of ourselves we would have preferred to get rid off
 But they are us
 They're not a kind of optional extra, or some alien poison
 They are what we have to work with as our existence
 This is why tenderness and sensitivity is very important in the practice
 It's not about being heroic or trying to achieve some amazing victory over difficulty

But rather about learning to collaborate
If we do this with everything that occurs then our life will become better.

In Dzogchen the main focus of refuge is one's own mind in its pristine purity
And effortless effulgence
If we don't rest in our own mind as it is then we will have to rely on
The manifestations of the mind without being aware of what they actually are.
It is this very open awareness of our mind
which allows the continuous flow of thoughts and feelings to arise
Yet when we get caught up in dualistic vision we don't see this.
Instead we believe that there is a difference between self and other,
Between what is inside and outside.
The practice is simply to allow this fabrication to relax and go free by itself
Samsara is a construct.
If you don't participate in its construction, it will not be there.
When we look around the room we see things that appear to be existing in themselves
But they are actually appearing on the basis of our habits of mental construction.
We're so used to this effort of dualising imagination that it's become normal for us
Relaxing this activity allows us to see the truth of what is occurring.

We just relax
And cease interfering with whatever occurs.
Now appearances show themselves as they are.
There is nothing to improve
There is nothing to be afraid of
Nothing to protect yourself against
Whatever kind of experience is coming, be with it as it comes
And when it goes, don't go after it.
Part of the unceasing movement of the mind
Is our sense of self which enables us
To function in the world
We respond to how other people emerge in this moment
Manifesting the spontaneous shaping that we show moment by moment as we interact with other
people.
This co-emergence is free of internal defining substance or essence
With this, our sense of self is revealed as responsive function
Not identity. Ego is manifestation
Not the ground, the basis, or the source.
When we lose touch with our own ground we think: 'It's all up to me, I have to do it on my own'
But we don't really know what to do or how to do it
We try our best in this complicated world
We make decisions which afterwards we might regret
And we carry an anxiety that our life is not quite right
Meditation allows the child-like ego to be a child without pretending
To be anything else. Integration with the mother
Ground, the source, is clear.

From the very beginning our mind has been open empty radiance.
The ego is self-referential energy
It is an aspect of the mind, not the mind itself.
The radiance of the mind is the radiance of the mind it's not the whole mind
This is why in the Dzogchen tradition and also to a certain extent in the Mahamudra tradition
Doing less is more
Because openness is already here
What is here is hidden by our own activity.

As manifestation we have limits
The issue is not to be limited by the limitations one experiences.
The mirror is not limited by the qualities of the reflection
So when you sit in meditation, with whatever kind of experience is arising,
Whether bright and shiny, agitated or dull,
Just allow it to be there without identifying with it or passing judgment.
The origin of suffering is ignorance and attachment
Outer attachments include attachment to particular people, to money, to houses and so on
Inner attachment is attachment to our evaluative template,
Our sense that something is right and something else is wrong,
That something is 'good' and something else is 'bad'.
However the mind is, stay present with the immediacy of what is occurring
Don't enter into judgment for
Judgment further separates subject and object.
Holding self apart from other, we think: 'This is not good, this is good'
But this doesn't take us anywhere useful.
So stay relaxed and open
Like the state of the mirror.
Whatever comes comes, whatever goes goes.
If I don't identify with what is arising
It goes by.
The glue, the attachment that binds me into the world,
Doesn't lie in the power of the object;
It lies in my own judgment.
Perhaps a little whirlpool of anger swirls in your mind,
Some memory about somebody having said something that upset you and
your thoughts go around that for a while.
If you rely on your dualistic template, then you are likely to think:
'Oh, this is not meditation, I'm distracted and so I have to stop this kind of thought and go into an
other state that we call meditation.'
This is the view of duality
How do I know I'm having angry thoughts?
Because I'm here, present with what is occurring
These angry thoughts are revealing themselves.
Who is the one they are revealed to? Me...
So what is this me, what is the mind?

We investigate this with five basic questions:

Does the mind have any shape or colour?
Does it have any size or dimension?
Does it come from anywhere?
Does it stay anywhere?
Does it go anywhere?
Again and again when we go into the practice, in a relaxed open way we should very gently take up these questions.
You don't want to pose the questions as if you were a police interrogator
But more in the manner of an ornithologist waiting for a rare bird.
You're in the forest
The bird will come
But you don't know when it will show itself
So you are alert and still, patient
Then you can see what is there.
So this is how we ask these questions.
You're already here, you are alive in this moment, in this room
So does this being here-ness, this presence, this awareness, stay anywhere?
You might think: Oh, it's in my head.
This idea is very popular in our culture,
Pointing as it does to a material basis of consciousness, neuroscience and so on.
Whatever conclusion you come to,
Just hold it very gently as a hypothesis.
A hypothesis is not the truth;
It may be the case, and may appear to be the case on the basis of the evidence that we have so far.
And we look again:
Where is my mind? Maybe some other answer arises
Now I have two places where my mind is
Oh, interesting! And you keep looking...
Until it is clear who the looker is.
The answer does not lie in the object, in the conclusion.
Thoughts are coming and going, coming and going
If I'm aware that there are thoughts, I'm aware
What is this awareness?
Is it something that arrives from somewhere else?
Thoughts seem to arrive and pass
This is movement.
Is awareness a movement or not?
Consciousness, as our subjectivity, is moving
The sense of myself, of how I am
Alters in relation to the experiences that are occurring.
But what I take to be subject and
What I take to be object are
Arising and passing
Revealed through illuminating awareness.
If I merge my ego presence into what is occurring it seems to be very real
But in being aware of this the mind is like the mirror
The seemingly real subject and object are in fact reflections in the mirror.
Reflection and mirror are not one thing and they're not two things
They are non-dual.
Open awareness is not contaminated by the limiting thought.

It offers hospitality to the thought and cannot be contaminated by the thought.
But if the energy potential of the subjectivity merges
Into the thought then thought leads to thought, proliferating, spreading...
Without the mirror there is no reflection
But the intensity of the movement of the reflections
Can seem to disguise the actual lucidity of the mirror,
The basis of the meditation is to trust the natural purity of the mind
And so not feel persecuted by the movement of the mind
Allowing the movement to occur without editing or controlling
Without merging into it and identifying with it and without trying to push it away.
This is our practice and we open to it again and again.
The key point is to relax and open
And let open awareness reveal what is occurring.
This is direct experience
However if you rely on thoughts to explain to yourself what is going on
Your understanding will be mediated through the interpretative patterns you already employ
And you will be caught up in the endless forest of thoughts and feelings.

The most important point is to open to the truth of who you are.
This is entirely dependent on you.
To develop the practice of being present with yourself in the field of clarity
You don't need any special cloth
You don't need a vajra and a bell
You don't need an altar
You don't need to get a Tibetan name
You don't need any initiation
All you need is to have a mind.
If you don't have a mind, bad luck
But we all have a mind.
It's running around, so it's clearly here
And you have many opportunities to let it show you how it functions,
What's it like to get lost, what's it like to be clear.
Being oneself is not being anything
Since there is no self.
What there is is a process of selfing.
Since you woke up this morning you have already been many different people
You are coming into formation moment by moment
Within the shifting patterns of the world you inhabit.
This is the unfolding of the potential of the mind
But if we spend too much time in involved looking at the patterns of selfing then
We won't open to the openness of awareness.
In order for there to be experience
There has to be an experiencer, an illuminator,
So remain present as the illuminating awareness itself.

For example in the sky there is the sun.
The sun sends out its rays and illuminates the world.
This is the symbol for the natural clarity or luminosity of the mind.

In the sky we also have the moon.
Last night the moon was very beautiful
Her light is getting stronger and stronger.
We say, 'her light' but the great thief,
That lying cheating moon
She has no light of her own.
She is an entrepreneur.
She takes the light from the sun, repackages it
And sends it down onto the earth for romantic people to swoon under!
The ego is like the moon;
The ego has no light of its own
It is repackaging the light of awareness.
This is not a bad thing to do
But we do need to know that the source is not the ego.
The ego has a light but it is a reflective light.
What is the source of the light?
What is the brightness of your mind?
This light is not necessarily something bright and shiny
It's the calm illumination of everything.
When you feel anxious or sad, or hopeless
It may seem that there's no way ahead,
That life has not worked out the way you thought it would.
These experiences, dark as they seem,
Are the expressions of the radiance of the mind.
The illuminator of all experiences is unborn awareness
So relax, open, stay present whatever is occurring.
This will reveal both the self-liberation of all phenomena
And the intrinsic purity of the mind itself.

Each moment of unfolding experience has an experiencer
This experiencer can manifest as a limited form or be revealed as infinite openness.
On the level of the reflection the experiencer is me,
The one who experiences my poor life, my poor heart.
This is me and it's so hard.
But this is a reflection, it's not the real source or the real illuminator.
Who is the one who experiences the despair?
What is illuminating this limited state?
This is the mind.
The mind is empty
It's an empty space like a theater stage which allows many productions to occur
The most important quality of any theater stage is that it's empty.
When a new play is going to be put on, the art department
Makes frames with wood and cloth and paints the props.
They help to set the mood of the play.
They are used as long as that play is running
They're made so that they can be taken down quickly.
If they were made of cement and steel it would be for a very long-running play
And it would block the stage from being used for anything else.

The more attached you become to the fixed elements of your memories, your history, your sense of self,
The more you fill the stage of your life with all the props of past productions
And then it's very difficult to know what's going on.
Whereas with the Dzogchen illumination of the self-liberation of each moment, the stage is always open
The mirror is always open
The mind is always open, even when the content is dull and heavy and self-referential.

This is the most important part of the teaching
And it is very practical.
When you despair of yourself, when you feel trapped in your limited identity,
This is a sign that you've merged into a reflection.
Reflections are transient formations
But the intensity of identifying with them seems to give them an incredible force and reality –
– and then they are gone! The world of that moment is no more.
How is that possible?
How is it possible that something that was so strong, so intense, is gone?
And yet life goes on...
This is the cruelty of existence.
Attachment to the impermanent brings suffering.
It's just like that, it goes on...

In countries where there has been civil war there are many deep wounds
Some families were split, brothers
Taking different sides
Dreadful things were done, unfair things.
These things happened,
What do they mean? Nothing definitive since many interpretations get offered.
Many stories about each event.
You can tell a Buddhist story: 'Oh yes, it is the five poisons operating; people behave with anger and so on...'
You can tell it from an anarchist story: 'People are always betrayed by governments...'
You can tell it from the point of view of the logic of the child: 'It's just not fair!'
Life is never fair
Bad things happen
What shall we do with this fact?
You can think about such events again and again and again
But nothing is resolved, no agreement reached.
It's gone.
In Britain there has been a lot of reflection recently on the First World War.
What should we think?
General are dogs?
Politicians are liars and cheats?
Soldiers are stupid?
What great conclusion are we to come to?
What is there to learn?
Many people die to no purpose

This is samsara
What shall we learn from it?
How can we behave so horrors never happen again?
After the First World War, books written about it,
Proclaimed that it was ' the war that would end all wars'.
Not true.
We know about the holocaust, but did it stop mass killings in Rwanda?
Clearly we are very fortunate to live at this period of peace
And reasonable stability in liberal democratic cultures.
This could vanish very easily, so
What will do with this rare opportunity?
If you put your energy into social planning and offering practical assistance to others
This could be very helpful
However, the three wheels comprising
– the truly existing subject, the truly existing object and the real connection between them –
Continue to turn.
Due to this whatever we do in a search for justice is going to ultimately fail
We are living in illusion and reliance on the three wheels is delusion.
There are no truly existing people
We are selfing as the potential we manifest interacts with the potential of the environment.
Selfing means there are always new possibilities because we never arrive at a fixed self.
It also means we are all complicated 'works in progress'.
I'm sure you know these famous stories about how the senior commandants and officers
In the concentration camps listened in the evening to Schubert and Schumann after a day of
enforcing horror.
How is this possible?
We want to think that these are terrible people,
That they would have to be so dull and stupid to do such terrible things
But in the evening they're drinking a glass of fine wine, listening to music, perhaps reading Goethe's
poetry.
This is the mind, divided against itself, and complicated beyond simplification.
Who are the good people, who are the bad people?
'Our enemies are bad, our friends are good.'
This is very simple, but it's not true.
If we ask the friends of our enemies
If our enemies are bad, they will say no!
As the Buddha said: 'Friends become enemies, enemies become friends.'
The people who cheat us are often people we know well.
Where are we going to stand so that we can tell the truth about the world?
Any self-assured position is likely to generate its own problems.
It is more useful to look at your own mind and watch it at work.
If you look then you will be able to see clearly
And avoid generating more dualistic stories.

The Text: The Cuckoo's Cry Heralding the Good Fortune of Glorious Presence

We will now look at a short text by Vairocana. It is said to be the first dzogchen text translated into Tibetan and held to be very authentic and reliable.
It begins, "*THE INFINITE DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCES AND THEIR ACTUAL GROUND ARE NON-DUAL.*"
The mirror and the reflections are not separate.

In the course of our lives we experience billions of moments, colours, shapes, sounds and so on.
Not one of these moments has ever gained a true, separate existence.
And yet, they occurred.
The reflection never leaves the mirror
And yet each reflection has its own particular impact.
Each form that occurs is empty of self-defining essence or substance
Yet they are presenting as undeniable experience.
The radiance of the empty mind manifests as ceaseless display.
This display is here and not here simultaneously.
It is undeniable as occurrence
Yet, there's nothing you can grasp and hold on to.

The text continues, "YET THE ACTUALITY OF EACH PARTICULAR OCCURRENCE IS BEYOND JUDGMENT."
What we say about any situation is both true and false.
It rings true because we can find others who will agree with us.
Yet this is just the play of word and thought: the actual eludes us.
Our opinions are false because they refer not to real entities
But to our own deluded imaginings that such entities have real existence.

For example, yesterday at lunch I had some interesting soup.
It was very creamy, very nice but I did not know what it was.
Something was there
Its actuality, the immediacy of it, comes in the mouth as experience
Yet I can't say what it is.
I might try to describe the ingredients or compare it to other kinds of soup I've had
But none of these comments is the soup itself.
The soup is edible but ungraspable.
It reveals itself as it lives and dies in the eyes, in the nose, in the mouth.
There is the bowl of soup,
A spoon,
The spoon goes into the soup, comes to the mouth, it's in the mouth and it's gone.
In its death, the soup offers itself.
The soup gives its last flowering for us
How shall we thank the soup? By talking about it? Or by being fully present with it?
Without reservation the soup offers itself to us, and where are we? Talking to someone
Music is playing, Tchaikovsky... you're checking your mobile phone...
Where are you?
With the soup? Are you here?
If you are present you get the soup.
You get nothing, nothing to put in your pocket, but you do get the soup!
This is our life.

This is what Vairocana is pointing to in the next line, "*WHAT IS KNOWN AS 'AS IT IS', IS UNTOUCHED BY THOUGHTS.*"

'As it is' indicates the given, the integrity of the ground source.
'It is untouched by thoughts' indicates that thoughts can't catch it,
And that it is not something that we can arrive at by relying on thoughts.

To continue with this ordinary example of the soup,
Anything we say about the soup will be adding something to the soup.
If you want to taste the soup as the cook made it
Don't add salt and pepper before you taste it
If you want to be with the moment of the tasting, of the seeing, of the hearing, don't add
interpretation.
The world doesn't need interpreting.
You see a flower, you see a situation, you see people walking by,...
Whatever manifests directly in this moment is just what it is.
There's nothing to do with it as it is.
Novelists might take some notes to use for a character in a book they are writing.
Artists might do a quick sketch to catch the gesture of someone's body,
'Oh, this is important!'
But everything is important,
Every appearance is completely perfectly itself.

With this we abide in equanimity with whatever arises
As subject or as object.
When we find ourselves open to the immediacy of life
We see that all experience has the one taste of emptiness.
In buddhism they write a lot about equanimity
In the Mahamudra text they write about "one taste"
Everything is special
Everything is ordinary
The movement arising in our own mind adds value, takes away value.
These attributed values are the play of the energy of the mind.
They disclose the display of the undisclosable ground.
Non-dual immediacy is self-arising as intrinsic clarity.
It is never a construct of concepts.
It relies on nothing, and only on nothing
Whereas concepts fabricate the misleading illusion of something.
If somebody shows you photographs of their holiday on the beach
You will not get a suntan
You have to be there to be there.
"Talking about" is not "it"
How it is, is "this"
And "this" is not a concept.
Awakening is not based on the accumulation of knowledge
It is unmediated aesthetic appreciation.
Aesthetic openness is fresh, naked with the vitality
Of the primordial purity of the doors of perception.
Beauty is the non-duality of awareness and emptiness
Revealing phenomena as ungraspable experience
Whereas the anaesthesia of conceptual elaboration is opaque
Preferring imagined events supportive of the dissolution of apprehension.
The dream phantoms of unawakening
Tempt and tease the dreamer,
Endlessly weaving hopes and fears
As the fabric of samsara.

Being awake and alive through our senses
Willing to receive everything
Without bias, judgment or selection
is the heart of the practice
since it is with this openness of welcome
that the completion of each moment is revealed.
There is nothing to add or subtract to what is
however once judgment by the located temporal ego
Is installed in the seat of power
correction, improvement, adoption, rejection
And a thousand forms of
Unnecessary busyness arise
Producing obscurity in the name of clarification

In London there are many clubs and bars that have bouncers outside
Because it's better to stop the troublemakers at the door
Once they're inside, they cause trouble, break glasses, have fights and so on
We also all have bouncers
We have our guardians
Judging, checking, making sure it's this okay, or not okay...?
Have these protectors protected us?
Have you had a life free of problems?
Perhaps their vigilant self-protective approach is not so useful.
The approach of Dzogchen is very different
No bouncers at the front door
In fact, no front door, and also no back wall
Come in, go through, go out
However you are is okay
Since you leave no trace in the space
When we fixate on a transient appearance as if it were a real something
– Oh my God, what am I going to do, why have I done this –
The actual event, the arising moment, is already out through the back non-door.
The mind is the room, not a box of building.
It is open space without limits
Ceaselessly displaying transient pattering.
The energy of the mind manifests as delusion
Becomes thick and sticky and seems to adhere
To other patterns of energy which have the same source.
Subject sticks to object; object sticks to subject.
This hallucination is blind to the actual
Self-liberation of all phenomena
Whether seemingly subject or object.
When the thought form 'I' relies on other
Thought forms in the search for clarity
The only result is more opacity, the dark mirror
Which seems bright to the deluded.
We try to make sense of the world
By defining, measuring, judging, evaluating;
Concepts examine concepts and produce more concepts.
Interpretations examine interpretations and produce more interpretations.

Yet the immediacy of appearance is directly meaningful, intrinsic clarity complete in itself.

If you look at a rose
You don't need to know its Latin name
You don't need to know who grew it
You don't need to know if it's going to last a long time.
These are all extras, concepts within relative conventional truth.
If you attend to these extras it will take your attention away from the rose.
The rose is the gift; you are the recipient.
The rose will show itself if you receive it
If you want to eat soup, don't use a fork
This is obvious
If you want to see a rose as it is, don't use interpretations.
There is nothing wrong with forks,
There is nothing wrong with interpretations,
But you have to use them for the right purpose
To see the rose you open your heart to the rose.
Now there is space for the rose to show herself.
With your open heart and the fullness of the rose
Your mind becomes peaceful.

Last night when we sat in a little outside café,
There were many disappointed opinions that place was ugly.
"Ugly" is a judgment
If you relax and open yourself to the colours and the shapes, it's just this as it is.
But once you say: "Oh, but there's an other part of town where things are better,
Where the wine is better and the tapas are delicious"
There is a closure, a shifting down.
The interpretations act as a wedge which separates us from the actual situation.
We're sitting in the interpretation "Why would I open myself to this place, it is so sub-standard?"
But what are we protecting ourselves against?
Any unpleasantness we experience is generated by our own interpretation
The world offers you this dish
You vomit your judgment onto it
And then you say: "I don't eat vomit."
How stupid is this! Don't vomit, then the food will be fresh

Vairocana indicates, *"ALTHOUGH THE GROUND NATURE IS UNTOUCHED BY THOUGHT YET THE FORMS OF APPEARANCE ARE UNOBSTRUCTED, BEING COMPLETE AS THEY ARE."*

Appearances are always everywhere the appearances of the ground.
There is no other source.
The source is primordially pure, open, naked, fresh, empty of everything.
The illusory non-dual display of this ground manifests
the ground which never shows itself directly.
Appearances have no substance or essence of their own.
They have no internal true definition and
Are not caught in definitions offered by other appearances.
Each appearance is open and empty even as we

take it to be something. This is 'somethingness' is
only the empty play of the empty mind.
Each appearance is fine as it is
This may be difficult for us to comprehend
For it is an aspect of non-duality and is beyond concepts.
The perfection of everything
Does not mean anything goes, that we don't care what happens.
It is not about intention or about the perceived qualities of the cause or the effect.
It is about presence.
The presenting appearance inseparable from the presence of awareness:
This is it!
This moment is the best and only, this particular moment there is.
There will be other moments
But this moment is this moment
When you have a cup of coffee and it's terrible
It's only terrible because of your memories of good cups of coffee
If this was the first cup of coffee you've ever had: Wow!
It is what it is, free of the contamination of interpretation.

It is what it is, always present ahead of "but it's not right"
The judgment is coming after the fact
The fact is the thisness of this moment.
The ego is always seeking employment
But the field of clarity has nothing to offer it.
However once you add your judgment then you give yourself a job
Now you can be busy interfering and customizing the world to suit your taste.
The intrinsic completion or perfection of each moment
doesn't mean that you are a hopeless victim, accepting whatever's there.
Look before you leap!
Act, if action is required, on the basis of the actual,
Not the imagined or imputed.
If you go swimming at the sea and it's a rocky place, you shouldn't just dive in
Because you don't know what's under the water
You go carefully, you feel with your feet
And if you know that this is deep water, then you act in accordance with those circumstances.
First you see what is there and then respond
Otherwise you're on automatic pilot
Projecting your neurotic fantasies, your habitual interpretations,
On to what you imagine is actual.

Vairocana then points out: "*BEING INTACT, WE ARE FREE OF THE SICKNESS OF EFFORT*"
'Intact' means not split, not divided, not torn.
When you open to the world, the experience of the arising field and
Your presence are absolutely integrated, they are not one, they are not two,
They are co-emergent in non-duality.
With this there is freedom from effort
What is required flows freely from the ground.
What is exhausting in life is anxiety,

Worrying, regret, uncertainty
These are all forms of hesitancy
We lose the rhythm, we lose the beat, we lose the moment.
Each moment is singular yet simultaneously in flow
If you're in the movement, it will carry you
If you come out of the movement, you get lost.
There was an interesting event in the last Olympic Games.
The one hundred meters is a very intense race
And all the people running it are incredibly fit and prepared.
I heard a commentator observe after the event that
For the first six seconds of the race, all the runners were just in the zone,
Completely focussed, right in the race
And then one of the runners moved slightly ahead
Just slightly
And the runners on either side of him turned to look at him
And he moved even further ahead
Because he was still in the zone but now they had gone into thoughts about him.
Their own thoughts interrupted their own progress.
Comparing and contrasting, we relativise our situation and so
Lose touch with its completeness, its non-duality.
This is what we all do in our lives
Going into little spirals of thought, we miss the moment and lose ourselves.
This helps to illustrate the logic in the practice of dzogchen
Relaxed doesn't mean lazy; easy doesn't mean carried away.
You can have a busy life doing a lot of things
But if the ground of our energy is relaxed it allows responses to arise and flow through us
As part of the world, as part of the non-dual environment
The energy of the world flows through us as us.
That's why we don't have to make effort.

Vairocana ends by saying, "*SPONTANEOUSLY ABIDING AND SO EVERYTHING IS SETTLED.*"
We are settled, everything is settled
Movement is inseparable from stillness
Abiding, resting, being here is spontaneous.
It is not the result of any cause, nor the fruit of any practice.
The mind is open, at rest, and all experience is inseparable from it,
Settled within it, free of coming and going, at peace.
There's no vibration.

CR Lama used to say, "*If a yogi has sex in the middle of the road, nobody notices
But if ordinary people have sex in the bushes, everybody is looking.*"
It means if you are furtive
This energy creates a kind of disturbance.
If you walk down the street and people are coming towards you,
You very quickly pick up if something's wrong with someone
If they are drunk or angry or disturbed this will be revealed in their movement.
If you are relaxed in your own skin you will experience minimal impact.
You don't have to disturb yourself on the basis of their disturbance.
You're not disturbing the world and the world is not disturbing you

There is transient disturbance then everything settles.
This doesn't mean that problems don't arrive
Since difficulties and confusion are part of our existence
But we don't need to go after them and get involved
We don't need to go ahead of them in aroused expectation.
If we are present as the world reveals itself
We will have the best chance of responding to what actually is.
If you're thinking about the past, you're not here
If you're planning into the future, you're not here
If you are here you have the optimal chance of working with actual circumstances
Because circumstances present themselves in the situation – they are not imagined but actual.
If you are teaching a class of children
Of course you have to maintain a degree of structure but
you also have to respond to the mood of the class.
If you meet the students where they are, in their mood
You align with them; there is synergy and
In being met they can settle, for they have been seen,
Their actual existence has been received and
You have shown your availability to them
This frees them to be available to you.
With this you have more chance to bring them towards the task of the topic
But if you tell them they are in the wrong mood and insist on attending to the task
This is not going to work.
Start with what is here and remain here.
Here is the only place to be
Now is the only time to be here.
Presence is the only means to be here now
The great disturbing factor is the ego
Seeking to insert itself where it is not needed.
What about me?
What about my plans?
The way to pacify the ego is not by control or indulgence.
When the mind settles in its true ground
There is satisfaction, peace, and the ego ceases to disturb.
This is called the dharmakaya, the Buddha's mind.
Resting in our own ground all is at peace
With this the radiance of the mind
Shines forth as the sambhogakaya,
The display of the clarity of
Unobstructed energy.
This is pure enjoyment free of attachment,
Adoption and rejection.
Then, without effort, myriad moments
Of manifestation occur
As gestures of connectivity, welcoming all beings
To their own availability to the ground and
All that it displays.
This inclusive contact of co-emergence Dissolves isolation and duality
Heralding the awakening of all.