
Easy Does It

The heart of the dzogchen teachings

JAMES LOW

WILD HEART GATHERING, EAST SUSSEX, UK

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TRANSCRIBED AND EDITED BY SARAH ALLEN

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Extracts:

We are not the content of our mind and yet we are inseparable from the content of our mind. The content of our mind is experience; it is not self-definition; it is not essence. Thus, if you have bad times, these bad times don't define who you are. If you get a bit crazy for a while or you feel collapsed or worthless and life loses its meaning, if you can relax and be with that, it then passes...



It is very important not to feel too in charge. The worst punishment you can get in life is to feel that "it is all up to me". That is a very sad and lonely place. Actually, our life is revealed through being with others. Our life comes to us; is given to us when we make the gesture of welcoming it. And sometimes that is happy and sometimes it is sad but it is a revelation; it is not a thing you can hang onto. This is really the basic heart of the dzogchen teachings; that there are no things, there are only moments of ungraspable experience arising within the open field of awareness. And the more we see that we are integrated in open spaciousness the more the moments are fine just as they are.



To open and see what is here is the purist form of phenomenology. It is allowing the world to be as it is and allowing ourselves to be as we are. You could say that this is the basis of a profound non-violence. Although the desire to develop ourselves and increase our good qualities seems to be a beautiful intention, it is actually a limiting obscuration. For every time we have an idea of who we should be and we try to become that idea, what we are actually doing is engaging in violence against how we are now. We are saying: "I am not good enough. I should be different from this. I would be better off if I was somebody else." Thus, our hope of betterment starts with an act of self-attack, trying to transform ourselves without even seeing the nature of the one we want to transform. The hostility of this attitude reinforces our dualistic structure: "I am taking up a position against myself in order to recreate myself in a way that will get more approval from other people and myself." We are just like a little mouse in a cage going round and round on an exercise wheel. There is no end to development for there are always new ideas about who we should be. Therefore, the key thing is to relax and open and be present with oneself as one is.



We are here, alive - so simply attend to that immediate presence of awareness that is our open ground, the ever present basis of all our experience. Simply be aware, be present in, with and as the flow of experience. Observe how movement, a gesture in space and time is an expression or revelation of ungraspable presence. Our open potential shows many forms, as self and other, yet no appearance defines who we are.

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Introduction

We now have a little time together to find a particular way of looking at ourselves to reveal a sense of the nature of our own existence. I will be talking about this from the point of view of dzogchen which is an aspect of Tibetan buddhism. Dzogchen is not concerned with elaborating particular structures of belief or formal practice but rather helps us deconstruct or let go of some of the knots and limitations that we can find ourselves bound into.

Everybody has a kind of agenda. We live in a very commercial world and in a sense we are all selling something – basically we are selling: *“I am a nice person, you should like me.”* We try to work out ways of doing that, finding our niche market of those whom we can convince that we are ok. However, this usually involves running a number, establishing a role. That is to say, we become very identified with a particular aspect of our personality or way of being. And through that identification there can be an increase in competence and, also, perhaps, of self-esteem or ease of being. Yet, at the same time we become diminished because we are identified with a particular formation or connection. That is to say, as soon as we take on a shape, the very nature of that shape will determine the possibilities of connection with other shapes. Thus, the more tightly formed we are – which is often a quality that goes with confidence – the narrower the area of interaction we have in the world. Rather than doing this, the dzogchen way of looking at life suggests that we relax a little and open to the experience of ourselves as participating in the widest range of possible encounters with other people. I will unpack this a little and later we will do some meditation.

Purification and development are already present

I would like to start with the idea of Buddha. Buddha in the Tibetan language is expressed as *sang gye*. This is made up of two terms: *sang* meaning to purify and *gye* meaning to increase. We can take that on a very basic level, thinking that we’ve all got problems, difficulties, things we don’t like about ourselves which we need to purify. We can also recognise that there are good qualities that we don’t have that we might like to get; so then there is the issue of how to develop ourselves perhaps through courses, workshops and so on. That is our general cultural position. However, of course, there is a difficulty in that because there is no end to development. There are many interesting people in the world and we see them and think, *“Oh, I would like to be a bit more like that,”* or *“Oh, how interesting, I had never thought I might be able to learn that,”* and so there is a kind of extension of ourselves out of ourselves towards some possibility of something that might be useful and fulfilling.

However, from the point of view of dzogchen these two aspects of purification and development are already present in us. It is just that in our preoccupations, in our identification with thoughts and ideas, we often don’t recognise our actual situation. We can explore this in terms of two linked aspects, stillness and movement. When we are just sitting quietly by ourselves we are not necessarily still; there is usually quite a lot going on. There are sensations in the body, thoughts and feelings. Who is having this experience? We are. That is to say, we stand *in relation* to our experience which allows us to say things like, *“I am a bit tired,”* or *“I am hungry,”* or, *“I am really interested in this.”* We find ourselves making commentaries on our experience in which the one who is having the experience is taken for granted: *“I am me,”* *“I am myself.”* And if you have been around for a few years, that notion of ‘being yourself’ gets quite developed: you have a lot of memories, you have seen good times, bad times, you have seen doors opening and then you have seen them closing. Thus, there is a sense, very often, of having to protect ourselves; that some things are good for us in the world and some are rather dangerous. Our own sense of self is

fragile because in order to stay alive we *have* to be in contact with other people. To be touched and moved is the very essence of existence but in order to protect ourselves we want to control what touches us and we want to control how we are moved. However, the more we define ourselves, the more limited we are in our repertoire of responses.

A central point here is to examine the way in which we define ourselves to ourselves and, through that, to start to see how other people define us to ourselves. That is to say, we live in unceasing feedback loops in which people like us or don't like us, are amused by us or not, and these responses from others don't arise from a stable state in them, and nor do they generate a stable state in us. Our sense of self and other fluctuates moment-by-moment as our mood changes and their mood changes. It is very easy to get caught up in a second-order reactivity to these shifts, and to think, *"Oh no, I did that wrong. I must try harder; there must be a better way of doing it, a better way of being me."* Hopefully you can see here that this creates a sense of *"I'm a work in progress. I cannot rest; there is always more to do,"* so that at the centre of our being is a kind of unformed-ness which feels a bit anxiety provoking: *"I should be more sorted."* We look around and see other people and they all seem to be sorted. We imagine that most people have got their lives together and we look at ourselves and think, *"Oh no, I'm all over the place."* The risk then is that we pretend to be more sorted than we are, developing a persona, an image of ourselves that we hope others, and we ourselves, will believe in. However, this creates a familiar problem: an image, if it is held in place, is going to be a restriction as well as a defence.

This leads us to the central point of how to start being present with ourselves as ourselves so that we can be revealed to ourselves by ourselves directly in the lived moment of our experience, not needing any elaborate system from outside, and especially not needing anyone to tell us who we are. From the time we were young we have had quite a lot of people telling us who we are; giving us information about the formation of ourselves. And that tends to lead to a sense of being a form, being a particular kind of person – but who is the one who is having this experience?

We live in a web of stories

Here we are sitting together and we are all breathing in and out – we are alive. Presumably you have thoughts, feelings and sensations at this very moment. Who is the one who is experiencing these thoughts, feelings and sensations? Normally we say, "I am. I know I am alive because things are happening *to me*." Thus, the fact that *I* feel the impact of things coming into *me*, onto me, and as it were, out of me towards the world, affirms the basic integrity of my existence. However, what we might see is that this is just a narrative, a story. I am using language to tell myself about 'who I am' as if I exist as a lubricious, hubristic phenomenon – the first person singular: *"I am me."* *"I am myself."* Although these statements seem to be pointing towards something which truly exists, in fact they are creating the illusion of some-thing.

For example, if I say, *"This is my watch,"* that is a very ordinary kind of statement. I am holding in my hand something which we can all recognise, for this is a watch and we have seen watches before as they are part of our world. We take the watchness of the watch for granted. However, how does language connect with reality? The thing in my hand seems to be caught by the word 'watch'. That is to say, when I say 'watch', the word seems to have a direct relationship with what is in my hand. However, the watch-ness of the watch is a cultural concept that belongs to us if we have been initiated into the cult of knowing about watches. When children are two or three years of age they know that this is a shiny object and want to put it their mouth or maybe stick it on their head or put it on a little car and drive it around. Later on, by the time they are six, seven or eight they are starting to have an idea of time and *then* they start to learn to tell the time. Thus,

each of these stages is an initiation into a way of reading a phenomena. That is to say, without the concept of 'watch' what would this be?

We live in a web of language, a web of stories; stories which can be very beautiful, very terrifying, frightening, depressing, anxiety provoking and so on. And our very sense of self, in its ordinary movement, is largely a linguistic creation. That is to say, *"I am the one who is revealed by the stories I tell about myself, and by the stories other people tell about me."* We come into existence as 'as ourselves' according to the particular shapings of an environment, and at the same time this constitutive movement of words, thoughts and feelings is being experienced. This presence is not the presence of something else, it is exactly who we are and yet is 'impersonal' in that it is not defined by any of the momentary appearances we take ourselves to be. There is an awareness which, like a mirror, reveals what is arising. For example, when we get up in the morning we clean our teeth and look in the mirror. What we see is ourselves; what we don't see is the mirror. That is to say, we see the *reflection* and we take the reflection to be a true account of who we are. However, the mirror-ness of the mirror, its capacity to show who we are, is not determined by the image that is in it. If that was so, when the first up in your household went to look in the mirror their face would get fixed into it so that the next person who went into the bathroom would see someone else's face and would not be able to see themselves. The very nature of a mirror is that it fills itself and empties itself, and it does that because it doesn't have any fixed content of its own. That is to say, it is the emptiness or the openness of the mirror that allows it to show many, many different images.

How can we be open to everything that occurs without being overwhelmed?

Since we were born each of us has been many, many different people: happy, sad, expansive, contracting, full of joy, full of fears and anxieties and so on. These states which were 'us', that we were fully identified with and which were extremely real in the moment, were contingent. That is to say, they arose in relation to other things that were going on. As far as I can tell we don't have any core essence, a thing inside us which doesn't change with circumstances. I have been looking for that for a very long time and I have never found it. You can also look for yourself to see if you can find the thing-ness of yourself as an enduring entity. Moreover, that absence of a fixed defining essence is actually the potential to reveal ourselves, to be revealed as ourselves, by circumstances. For example, if you come to a meeting place like this and you don't know anyone you might feel a bit lonely, sad or intimidated, and then some friendly person says, *"Hello, good morning,"* and you suddenly feel a bit better. You feel the warmth of their gesture of connection and your mood shifts. Is that your experience? How you were before, which felt exactly how you were, where you were perhaps thinking, *"Oh god why did I come here?"* suddenly changed and you felt, *"Oh, this is ok."* In this, we can see how momentary identification with states is the ongoing experience of how we are in the world with others. However, if we take ourselves as a fixed point, like a fixed self, then we end up feeling like a cork on the waves which is lifted up and dropped down by events. And that is very exhausting because so much is happening to us in the course of a day. Therefore, how can we be open to everything that occurs without being overwhelmed, stressed out and worn down? This is an important issue in modern life when there are so many demands, so many forms of communication coming at us all the time.

From the point of view of dzogchen the main issue is to relax and to open. This means to let go of our tendency to over-identify, to concretise, to reify, and to take as permanent and reliable, experience which is actually ephemeral. You cannot catch the moment. Here we are together and I have started talking. I will talk a little bit more and then this will be over and something else will begin. Ever changing experience cannot be blocked or frozen. Earlier you were sleeping. You

then woke up, then you had pee, then you had some breakfast, now you are here, and soon you will be doing something else. This is our life. It is a continuous flow of experience which is ungraspable and infinitely variegated.

One common response to this is to try to impose a sense of order. *"I have to be in control of 'my' life. I need to work out what is going on and if possible I want to make it happen on my terms."* However, this generates a lot of stress because, of course, we are not in charge of our existence. Moreover, we co-create our lives with other people; our very existence is participative and through being part of what is going on we find ourselves revealed to ourselves. We don't exist as anything before we manifest. We might think, *"Yes, but I have lots of memories, I know what my life has been and I know what I am like."* However, that is just an idea. We could get into pairs and I could ask you to introduce yourselves to your partner and you would start to tell them something. You may tell them where you were born, what you do or what kind of food you eat. That is to say, you would construct some kind of story. You could do that for five minutes, five hours or five years but would you get to the end of the number of stories you could tell about yourself? Even while you were telling them your story, the telling of it is itself a new experience so you would then have to comment on the experience you are having, and then would have to comment on the comment – and so on. There is no end to storytelling. There is no end to thought or feeling or sensation. These are ceaseless waves of stuff that go on and on and on. So, is there a way to avoid getting lost in this?

Remain infinite and open – not existing as a thing

We have two possibilities as human beings. One is to be small and the other is to be big. We all know what it is like to be small; we get a hit by life, we feel a bit crushed and we start to shrink. We feel a bit anxious, we don't want to answer the phone and maybe we don't want to open our letters; we might not even want to get out of bed – it all feels too much. In that experience, the world seems very, very big and we are small; we are a *thing* and there are lots of *things* surrounding me, more of *them* than *me*, and they keep whacking into me. Everything is coming at us and we just want to say, *"Go away. Leave me alone."* This is a terrible state to be in. From the buddhist point of view this way of experiencing events exemplifies the primary delusion: that we are a thing, a thing among things. It seems obvious that I am a vulnerable thing and therefore I have to protect myself and increase my benefit. Due to this belief we are always trying to push away bad things, to find out what is good for us and get more of it. We spend an awful lot of our lives doing this, checking out: *"Is this good for me? Is this not good for me? Do I like this? Do I not like this?"* It goes on and on and on.

But what is this small self? We feel a bit afraid. What is that fear? It is something which is arising. It wasn't there before but due to specific causes and circumstances we are suddenly afraid. In this moment the fear *seems* to be who we are – but we weren't like that before. That is to say, we lose ourselves into the moment so that each moment seems to define who we are. Thus, if we have a good day or a good spell in our life where everything goes easy we tend to think, *"Hey, not so bad."* And then the causes and conditions change and life becomes difficult and we think, *"How could this be possible? I was happy before. I have done so many workshops. I have done my yoga and meditation and yet now I feel like shit again. How can this be possible?"* Well...it is possible because there is no wall between ourselves and the world; we are part of the world. And sometimes the world is smiling and sometimes it is not. Dreadful things happen in the world and if we are at all human we are going to be affected by that. The question is: can we stay open to being moved and changed, which is the aspect of participation, without being blown hither and thither at the mercy of experiences? The answer to that is to remain big. So what does that involve?

Very big means unlimited, infinite. It means not existing as a thing which has a beginning, an end, a top and a bottom, which has a fixed shape. That is rather different to how we normally experience ourselves, yet we don't have to do anything special to avail ourselves to it. Our infinite nature is there by itself, it is not the result of any effort by ourselves or others. We are here, alive – so simply attend to that immediate presence of awareness that is our open ground, the ever present basis of all our experience. Simply be aware, be present in, with and as the flow of experience. Observe how movement, a gesture in space and time is an expression or revelation of ungraspable presence. Our open potential shows many forms, as self and other, yet no appearance defines who we are.

However, our small self is vulnerable to being defined by others, and indeed craves definition as a way of establishing identity. The ego develops itself through fusing with key events and developing a sense of functional limit. For example, most children, from time to time, experience difficulties at school. They can find that some subjects are a bit hard for them and this is often distilled into a sense that 'I can't': "*I can't do languages*", "*I can't do maths*" and so on. This belief then acts as the definitive storyline which influences all the choices that are subsequently made. If we have grown up in a family where there wasn't much tenderness or love, then bleakness and abandonment becomes a territory that we can visit again and again. Or we may have had a lot of intrusion from other people and had to adapt to their demands. We can become so compliant that it is difficult to work out who we are. There are many ways in which we can get off balance in our interactions with other people and with ourselves because we look for a fixed point of balance, a reassuring certainty, good or bad. However the point of balance is ever-changing in the dynamic field of emergent experience. We lose our fresh presence by maintaining storylines about ourselves which are limiting and partial. However, because they are habitual they *seem* to be expressing some deep and defining truth about ourselves, and so we tend to cling to them without examining if they are accurate or even useful.

Thus we might take our present good health for granted. Yet inside us we have all kinds of incredibly complicated systems which can go wrong: we could have a stroke, develop cancer and so on. Our present state can easily change. What we take to be definitive of 'who I am', the fixed beliefs which we inhabit, is not reliable. All kinds of internal winds and external winds can blow us around, for our identity is not an essence but a changing form manifesting within the dynamic causal field of appearance.

So what is the status of these statements I tell myself about who I am? Do they really define an essence? Or are they parts of the ongoing process of meaning-making, parts with which we have become particularly identified. For example, you might think, "*I don't like myself very much, and I don't think other people will like me.*" That belief, that identification with concepts, is likely to make you socially anxious. You are going to avoid opportunities because you believe the outcome is already determined. Because of the pre-occupation with that state, you probably won't check out what is happening in the world. You don't really know whether people like you or not because it would be too scary to ask them. Imagining that they don't like you, you create a defensive barrier of avoidance. The root of all this painful and unnecessary activity is the belief that I am a fixed and knowable entity.

The view of dzogchen suggests that we simply release identification and, abiding in easy relaxation, see the creation of ourselves moment-by-moment. Without interfering simply observe all the constituents of our being as they arise and pass. In their flow they make particular patterns, a bit like a child turning a kaleidoscope. Something is there and then...turn...and there is something different. Moreover, due to our conditioning, for most of us there are not many constituent parts; we have a repertoire of moves that, in their repetition, establish our fairly standard personality. The more we see the dynamic flow rather than fixating on our familiar

beliefs, we see how, according to circumstances different aspects of our personality come forward as each new reformation of our 'self' comes into being.

Through looking clearly we start to see that our situation is dynamic. All that I take myself and my world to be is changing in its phenomenological immediacy. Concepts create the illusion of continuity. Each moment is present yet ungraspable. Whatever I take any moment to be is transient and contingent. Thus my existence is not some-thing inside *me* that comes out of me *into* the world. Actually, I don't know who I am until I reveal myself in activity, and each time I appear, I am somebody new. This is amazing because it reveals our potential as forever free. Instead of looking to find a definitive recipe inside ourselves, we start to see that we are called into being by the situations we participate in, that we are truly co-emergent with the other, that our self is something which is part of a co-becoming with other people. For example, if people are warm towards us we become, we manifest, in a corresponding way, and if they are cold we become in a different way. There is no fixity to our manifestation. The fact that we are so easily influenced points to the possibility of influencing others, of behaving in a way that elicits the most open and connected aspects of the other. From the buddhist point of view this is the aspect of compassion, an attitude which warms the world through contact.

As we become more open to other people we all feel a bit more relaxed. Gradually we come to have confidence that life is easier without protective barriers. If I can only move towards you if you fit into my map of the world then I am using you to reaffirm my beliefs. Your habits confirm my habits and together we live in a lovely padded prison. It may be comfortable for a while, but it is fantasy that is restrictive and which won't last. Here, at this event, people arrive at the field, tents go up, something is created for a few days, and then it is gone. And this is the pattern of our lives moment-by-moment. We put up the tent of the morning, take it down at noon and put up the tent of the afternoon. Then in the evening we put up the tent of sleep. In that way we live in each of these little environments as if they were the real thing, and then they are gone.

Just be present with the world as it is and ourselves as we are

So who is the one who is having this experience? There are many, many buddhist teachings on this point but experientially it is not so difficult, for the key practice is just to observe ourselves in the very moment of becoming ourselves. The one who is observing, in order to observe, cannot have an agenda. It cannot be looking *for* something otherwise it is only going to find what it is looking for. Therefore, the observer has to relax, let go of all assumptions, receive what is there and see clearly.

This simple task can be especially difficult in our modern world because we tend to be rewarded for being active. From an early age we are encouraged to believe that we have to *make* our lives by *doing* things. By finding out what is going on and controlling it we seem to validate ourselves, strengthen our energy and create meaning. On the other hand, that very activity, because it is intentional, operating within a pre-existing frame of reference, installs a foreclosure. We think we are being open, because we know what we want, but this carries a closure. For example, if you run out of flour while you are baking and you nip into a shop just to get flour, you are not interested in anything else in that shop. It is very important that you get the flour yet the shop has many other possibilities. In the same way, the more we become wedded to a particular pattern, a particular shape, the selective attention which maintains it is taken for granted and is difficult to recognise. Therefore, the first thing is to explore for yourself the relationship between relaxation and openness, and to practice receiving or seeing what is there. As long as we keep

looking for a succession of particular things, we block out the happenstance incidents which can stop us in our tracks and ease us from our burdens.

To observe ourselves is to adopt the stance of not knowing anything. The more you know, the more that knowledge will determine how and where you look. Therefore, the practice is simply to relax and be present with what is going on. Then we start to observe how quickly we close our potential down, how quickly we get caught up in the knots and prejudices and assumptions which give us the sense of 'this is how I am'. For we are habituated to believe in something; we want and need to be something. Thus, looking for our true self, looking for our buddha-nature, looking to find out who we really are, sets us off on a wild goose chase. That is to say, it is already the wrong kind of question because it is assuming that what we will find is simply a better version of who we are now: *"It will be me without anxiety, without depression, without worries. I will just be a more cool, relaxed chilled version of me."*

With that point of view we try to edit and improve our existing sense of self. There are many people offering workshops on how to edit our story, to introduce new symbols into it or enrich it with techniques and skills. However, we have to be very careful and see how easily we are seduced, enchanted, mesmerised by storylines. By observing ourselves with an openness free of hopes and fears we start to see the main person who cheats us is ourselves. For when we think we are open to seeing what is there, we are actually looking for something in particular. We are looking for approval, looking to be good, looking to have a nice story to tell other people, looking to move up the stages of the path so that we can be rewarded by other people and be seen as being a proper kind of person. There are so many cul-de-sacs leading off the path of openness. They all have the same nature; they seek to find something that can be found.

To open and see what is here is the purist form of phenomenology. It is allowing the world to be as it is and allowing ourselves to be as we are. You could say that this is the basis of a profound non-violence. Although the desire to develop ourselves and increase our good qualities seems to be a beautiful intention, it is actually a limiting obscuration. For every time we have an idea of who we *should* be and we try to *become* that idea, what we are actually doing is engaging in violence against how we are now. We are saying: *"I am not good enough. I should be different from this. I would be better off if I was somebody else."* Thus, our hope of betterment starts with an act of self-attack, trying to transform ourselves without even seeing the nature of the one we want to transform. The hostility of this attitude reinforces our dualistic structure: *"I am taking up a position against myself in order to recreate myself in a way that will get more approval from other people and myself."* You can see how knotted that quickly becomes as assumption and effort energise each other. We are just like a little mouse in a cage going round and round on an exercise wheel. There is no end to development for there are always new ideas about who we *should* be. Therefore, the key thing is to relax and open and be present with oneself as one is. We want to move out of judgement, out of aspiration, out of intention, and be just like a mirror, open and clear, revealing whatever is there without interfering.

Interfering, or the will-to-power, the determination to make things happen the way we want them to, is not a bad quality but it needs to be applied in the right place. Sharp knives are very useful in a kitchen, but you don't really want to meet a drunken teenager carrying one in the street at night, because that is the wrong place for a sharp knife. In the same way, having a determination to achieve something is the manifestation of our energy in the world, and if it is attuned through participation with others it can be very helpful. However, if you apply it to yourself to try to determine who you are, all you do is turn yourself into a kind of clay which you then find to be the wrong shape. Then you are condemned to endlessly kneading and squeezing it to bring it into the proper shape – but the proper shape for what? The observer, awareness, our own immediate presence is not a thing. It is the ground of manifestation in that it illuminates

all that appears, yet it is itself never an appearance. To see ourselves is to be ourselves as pure being, which is itself inseparable from yet never conditioned by our ceaseless revelation of being this, then this, then this.

We live in a world with other people and what we can do is determined by our own and others' ideas. What is ok to do at twenty is not what you can do when you are forty, and when you are sixty you cannot do what you did when you were forty. At each stage of life we function within systems of expectation. Even when we resist others expectations of us we still act within limiting, defining assumptions. We live in a society where we are going to have a lot of old people, and yet we have a culture which is rather dismissive of old people, in which there is very little sense of *how* to be old. Being old means knowing first of all that you are not young: "I am not twenty-one anymore so I cannot do what people of twenty-one do. Over the hill...past my peak...sunset here I come." This could be taken as an insulting dismissal, a denial of all we have been, yet it is also an invitation to recognise that real changes have occurred. The seeming continuity of ourself as a core essence is an illusion that leads to grief when we experience that, "I can no longer do the things I used to." It is as if by saying 'I' a continuity of substance is created so that the one who could do them then and the one who cannot do them now were the self-same person. Yet the past is gone, who we were no longer exists. What we are now is both the unconditioned openness of our awareness and the precise form of our current manifestation. It is the natural integration of these two aspects which is our basic freedom rather than the illusion of freedom embedded in striving to maintain a form whose time has gone.

Each form is just what it is, an illusory, ungraspable manifestation that can be manipulated by the controlling ego or accepted in open presence by awareness. Each season of life offers these two options. Acceptance and participation with what is actual is the basis for practice. In the ageing process, acceptance of our season is freedom. There is something to learn in each season. Out of the nothing, the emptiness of winter, comes the fullness of summer which, inevitably, becomes the emptiness of winter. The pulsation between the turn towards form and the turn towards emptiness is continuous, with each turn illustrating the illusory nature of each aspect, for they are inseparable in non-duality. The outer level of the seasons, the inner changes of our own ageing, and the secret fluctuations of our thoughts, feelings and sensations are not separate domains. All manifestation has the same ground and the same nature: empty appearance like rainbows in the sky, like summer mirages, like the reflections of the moon on water.

Autumn is about reception, it is about letting go so that the earth receives the leaves and fruit; it is about sinking back to the source. Releasing the fixation on form is also part of the practice of meditation, as we leave the ego's fantasy domain of the never-ending growth of spring and summer. The ego can never get enough: the more it sets in motion the more it has to do, a bit like the story of the sorcerer's apprentice. In meditation we move into a different season, away from the ego's desire for endless summer and into the spaciousness of winter. This is the terrain revealed by releasing and relaxing, emptying out our assumptions and letting go of all that we know.

What we call ourselves is a movement of dialogue

"But who will I be if I have nothing?" Well that is what we have to find out. *"But I don't want to investigate myself, I just want to be the me I know I am!"* Why? *"Because I know how to do it and because I know that it makes sense."* That is the point where we decide to stay in our familiar habitual narrative, our storyline, which, again, is cosy. It is not bad, it can be useful; it is just that it is limited. We will never experience our unlimited nature if we keep identifying with

what is limited. Thus, there is a kind of trust that is involved in letting go of the form in order to experience ourselves as formless, as shapeless. Out of this formlessness many forms arise. This is the paradox that out of nothing comes everything, yet when we cling to something it keeps slipping away. It has always been like this. This is the fact of our lives; it is not some kind of abstract theory.

For example, you were once five and when you were five you did things you didn't do later when you were ten. And when you were fifteen you weren't doing the things you were doing at ten. Each of us has been through that; we have been many different people. That is a fact. Now, you could add all these experiences together layer-after-layer like a huge lasagne: *"This is my life; this is how it is,"* or one can see *"Where am I alive? ...only here...only now in this transient point of infinite dissolving. It is happening moment-by-moment. Something new is happening and all that has happened has gone and all that hasn't happened yet hasn't arrived."* That is to say, if we stay with the immediacy of experience rather than elaborating a narrative, we see that all we have is this moment. The very transience of all the things that have happened can help us see that this moment will also go, and that therefore this moment cannot be our true essence. This moment cannot define who we truly are, it can only show how, here and now, we are contextually revealed.

Our manifestation is the display or the movement of our energy in the world with others. But where does it come from? You could say from god, you could say from karma, or you could look directly and see: where do you arise from moment-by-moment? Where does this world come from? You could study Charles Darwin or you could just be present with yourself. Everything is happening but what is the ground of that happening? We won't get to it by a story because stories cover the ground in the very act of trying to reveal it. The world is full of stories about where we came from. Every culture has some kind of primordial foundation myth about gods coming down on a ladder or a piece of clay being breathed into and so on. More locally we also have the stories of our families; our parents and grandparents. Through therapy we can come to see how our personalities have developed with the family matrix. This can help generate a more supportive story. But it is still a story.

The question, then, is to look at this moment and see where does it come from? For example, at the moment I am speaking and words are coming out of me. There is no word factory inside me; I don't have a little script that I am pulling out of my tongue like a kind of ectoplasm. I am speaking with you. Here I am, I look around, I see your faces and the words come out of my mouth and after a while they will stop. That is what being human is. Where does this come from? It comes from our being together. The words only have meaning if you are here. Perhaps I could become like one of these driven preachers, I could bring along my soap box and put it in the field with the cows and tell them the good news and the holy truth, but there's not much point to that. That is to say, we emerge in situations. And we can only do that if we are open to the situation; not having something to sell, not having an agenda. Of course, we have many micro-agendas and they are part of the mix but they can also limit our intention and availability. By opening to all the available ingredients, all the potential resources, we can relax and allow the co-emergence of self and other as temporary gestures. If we start to experience the immediacy and unpredictability of our co-emergence with the environment, the actuality of the non-duality of self and other, subject and object, then we don't need to be so afraid, for we see that it is not all up to us. Actually, other people will give us what we need. They give us a smile or a nod or a frown and we are there in that moment with them.

There is an enormous loneliness in living inside oneself. Our education and human culture generally encourages a kind of mentalisation, a sense that we live *inside* ourselves, maybe, indeed, in our heads as a bunch of ideas: *"I have a mental existence and I have to work out how*

to move out from myself into the world where you guys live – you guys are already out there in the world but I am in me.” That is what most of us experience: we look out of our eyes, we listen out of our ears, to all this stuff which is already going on, with the feeling of how do we get into it?

This is, of course, an illusion. In buddhism this is the foundational illusion of believing in the essential duality of self and other, subject and object. That is to say, the sense of ‘we’ has been torn apart by the habit of ignoring what is there and assuming a fundamental separation and difference between me and you. This leads us each to a pre-occupation with our own ideas, our own ‘internal’ stuff. Actually, we are all in this together; we are born into the world as part of the world; we are always participating in being with others. And therefore, how we are, including what we take to be inside ourselves – our thoughts, feelings, sensations and so on – are created out of the presence of others. If you go off for a walk on your own in the woods things will be arising, as it were, internally, but they arise in relation to something else. Perhaps there are memories of being there before with a friend who is not there now. There is some story of this and that, and certain feelings arise. That is to say, you are in interaction; we don’t have a singular self. What we call ourselves is a movement of dialogue, a movement of energy going ‘out’ and energy coming ‘in’.

Three ‘Aa’ meditation

I will now show you a very simply form of sitting which can open up some of what we have been talking about. The function of the practice is to integrate stillness and movement, and because we tend to be caught up in movement a lot of the time, in the practice we tend to privilege stillness. This doesn’t mean that meditation is primarily about a retreat or withdrawal; rather it is to explore the site or the point from which you have experience.

At first we sit in a quiet way but after a while you can continue this as you are moving around, participating in whatever is happening: talking, eating and so on. The practice is not about doing something different but rather awakening to your own nature. The whole function of this practice is not to make anything artificial; rather it is to find a natural point of relaxed openness which allows whatever is occurring to occur without interference. With whatever appears, including all that you take to be yourself, let it be as it is.

You can try this with your eyes open or closed. However, generally, we do it with our gaze open into the space in front of us. If you close your eyes it can give the sense of being, as it were, in oneself, as if ‘this is who I am’. Whereas, what I have been attempting to share with you is that who we are is all of this together; all that is occurring moment-by moment is happening all at once. For this reason, in this tradition, we usually do the practice with our gaze open. We are not staring at anything but our gaze is gently focused about two arms length in front of us. We ease ourselves into the space so that we are not staring out and we are not going hazy. We are just relaxed and open. And then, to release the tensions and the ways in which we are caught up in identification with thoughts and feelings, we just make an easy sound, usually making the sound, ‘Aa’. You can do it on the silent out-breath if you are at work and you need some space, but here we can make the sound ‘Aa’ three times.

‘Aa’ in the tradition represents openness, the nature of the mind and the ground of all the buddhas. It releases everything without establishing anything. ‘Aa’ as a sound is held to be the basis of all other sounds. In the Sanskrit and Tibetan alphabets all the consonants take ‘Aa’ as their vowel and so there is a sense that all words and constructions arise from it. Thus, ‘Aa’ is the

point of elaboration into all language, all words, all naming, but also the point where they can all be collapsed down into silence. And that is what we do as we say 'Aa'; we let all our constructions dissolve into emptiness. All the entities of the world, including ourselves, are held in place by our own mental activity. Actually they are empty of inherent self-nature; they have no internal defining essence. When the mind is still there is only space and clarity. This open emptiness is the infinity within which all movement, all experience, is always already integrated.

After we have made the sound of 'Aa' we just sit in an open way, relaxed with whatever comes. If it seems like business as usual, your usual thoughts, just open to them, don't collapse into them and follow them because that is already an activity. As much as possible, allow what is arising to come and go. This includes all that arises for our senses, and all thoughts, sensations, feelings. The key point is to observe movement as movement. If a thought catches you, for example, if you are suddenly aware of the wall and you enter into the thoughts that arise about it, they will take you on a little journey without actually going anywhere. As soon as you recognise that this has happened, just stay present with that fact and some space will open up. We enter into worlds created by the juxtaposition of thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions, and each of these transient, captivating worlds is in flow. Thus, it is not that we are trying to empty the mind, as the empty mind is constantly emptying and constantly filling. Without resisting the patterning, without trying to maintain any particular direction, we just sit at ease allowing our experience to be however it is. Let us do this for a short period of time, maybe ten minutes or so.

Recognising the integration of stillness and movement

In practicing in this way, we are not attempting to shape the mind in a particular direction. For example, if you do shamata or vipassana meditations, that is to say, calming the mind or developing insight into the arising and passing of experience, there is a particular intention wherein you are out to try to do something, to become more calm or more clear. However, the difficulty with intention, as I was indicating earlier, is that it means there is a kind of formalism which takes over; one is shaping oneself towards something. The 'good' idea becomes a template that we then strive to align ourselves with. However, most of us live in the complexity of unregulated daily demands. We are not living in a monastery where you can sit for many hours a day in a particular ritualised way. We have to be in interaction with other people in all their unpredictability. Therefore, if we privilege a kind of stillness which is only achieved by separating from what is going on, by renouncing the situation, we then find the world to be quite problematic. And of course many people who go on meditation retreats experience that. While they are on retreat everything is calm and clear but then they come back into the world and they find themselves feeling disturbed, in fact perhaps defiled, because everything seems almost contaminated compared to the purity of a sacred space.

However, the mind itself cannot be contaminated. Awareness is not polluted by anything that occurs. Just as with a mirror, it is not made happy by having something beautiful put in front of it nor made sad or disturbed by having something ugly put in front of it. Whatever arises in awareness just passes through. It doesn't leave any trace. However, whatever arises for us as a 'person' does have an impact and does have a trace. Thus, the vital thing is to see the difference between your participative consciousness, that is to say, the way in which you process your experience, and the basic awareness which reveals this experience. To be human is to be happy and sad and so on; it would be tragic not to have that experience. If you go to holy place you can see holy people being holy and what they have is a 'holy life'. That is their choice, one that carries advantages and disadvantages. But you can also have an ordinary life; you can watch television, eat a pizza, or you can run around and cause mayhem. The key thing is to see the actual nature of what is occurring. If you are good, if you are bad, what is the actual quality of that? It is activity.

It is movement. Our activity displays our energy, our movement – it does not define who we ‘really’ are. This is because our ground, our source, our being, our ‘essence’, is an unborn, ungraspable openness. Our movement is important only in terms of its impact on others. It doesn’t establish anything beyond the moment of its appearance. To try to make the mind not move, where mind is understood as being composite, the sum of ‘all that I am’, is impossible, ridiculous. However, a lot of meditation techniques aim at this goal. For although the mind as awareness is always calm, the mind as manifestation, as thought, feeling, sensation, experience, is always moving.

Movement is the quality of compassion; we go out towards the world and the world comes towards us. We experience both world and self simultaneously. But who is the experiencer of the flow of that compassion? This is the mind itself, like the mirror. The mirror never changes but the formation of ourselves in the world with others is changing all the time. Therefore, to try to stop your thoughts, to try to get them to be like orderly sheep going one after the other is a practice which requires a huge amount of effort and cannot really go anywhere. This is because it can only be maintained for a while under certain conditions, and when the conditions change it stops happening. It is very liberating to see this.

There is a concept in buddhism, dependent co-origination, which means, simply, ‘on the basis of this, that arises’; ‘this event’ and ‘that event’ are always linked together. ‘Self’ and ‘other’ are not two separate worlds. For example, people insult us and we feel angry or upset or people are sweet to us and we feel warm and connected; that is just how it goes. These are the pulsations of life. It is like a pontoon bridge. As soon as you put your foot on one bit another bit moves. It is constantly like that. The idea that you could stabilise it would be impossible; pontoon bridges move, that is what they do. The whole of existence is an interactive field – nothing stands apart or alone.

Therefore, recognising movement as movement allows us to see the difference between stillness and movement, and also to see that the two are integrated, that they are inseparable. They are different but inseparable. If you try to get the ‘bit’ that is still to move, it is not going to happen, and if you try to get the ‘bit’ that moves to be still, it is also not going to happen. So, being clear about the difference between stillness and movement is very important.

Thus, when we sit, movement is occurring, and that’s fine. We don’t have to block it. What we start to see is how there are different levels of movement. For example, a thought arises and then we have a reaction to it. If we like the thought we want to hang onto it or we fall into it and go into a little story for a while. And if we don’t like it, or think that we shouldn’t have it in our mind, we try to push it away and dis-identify with it. These reactions are also movement. The movement of this editorial, self-defining aspect of our existence is not wrong, just perhaps a little unnecessary, for it is grounded in the idea that ‘I am the one who will determine what happens to me’. ‘I am the one in charge’ – this feels normal, as if it is true. Yet it is just another movement without essence or fixed place to stand. There is not a definite ‘me’ who is in charge of my life, a ‘me’ who can constrain what is going on. This is even clearer if you have kids, for your life is never going to be yours again; you are going to get moved here and there. To participate is to be part of something and that means not being in charge of it from the top, but also not being subjugated by it, but to be in it. You are in the morass, you are moving with it, as part of it. That is the nature of movement.

Wisdom and compassion: a natural aesthetic of connectivity

To require movement to be still and orderly is a kind of insanity. Rather, we can simply allow movement to arise as it does so that we experience its ephemeral beauty. Thus the organising principle becomes not control but our aesthetic appreciation. Fixed positions and solid beliefs are a kind of anaesthetic, they put us to sleep and lull us with dreams of the ego's power and knowledge. Awakening is a return to the aesthetic, to the immediacy of the senses, to the richness of experience. Staying open to what is, reveals a new sense of beauty, not as a quality present or not in the object, but as a mode of being, the richness of engagement with the unedited field. In the tradition this is referred to as the sambogakaya, the body or sphere of enjoyment of everything.

As our fear of the world lessens, we open to a more attuned attention to how other people are. This attention allows us to be more precise, more exquisite, in our relation with others. We are then not having to pull them in or push them away according to our map of how things should be; we accept that other people are as they are and work with that. Then the question, "How will I be with them?" becomes creative, opening us again and again to our infinite potential. If, however, we stick to a very narrow repertoire of moves, there will be a lot of people we won't want to be with because we cannot strut our stuff with them: *"I can't boogie because they don't play my tune."* That is the general limitation of being over-identified with what we take to be the fixity of our personality.

The task then is to live in the vibrant actuality where wisdom and compassion are linked together. In the sitting practice, the more we allow the wild frontiers of our mind to be revealed, the more we start to see how really strange we are and see the kind of weird shit that is moving around inside us. When we are not frightened by that, that acceptance loosens us up so we are more able to make diverse moves in the world with other people. We then start to be able to meet people as they are, and respond into the situation as it is. For example, if you hang out with kids you do what kids need you to do. Then, if you speak with adults or you speak with elderly people, your mode of being changes. You speak in different ways with angry people and with sad people. That is to say, each of these interactions can allow us to come forward, to manifest into the situation with a fine tuning which is not an act of will but is just the natural aesthetic of connectivity. It is not something you have to do but rather an easy flow of emergence revealed by putting yourself in the way of it. And we do that by releasing all the intentions, plans and opinions that are our habitual site of operating, and trust that our open presence in the moment will be enough.

Thus, the more relaxed we are, the more at ease, the more finely attuned we become. And the harder we try hard, the more we set agendas for ourselves, agendas that create a kind of blinkering or foreclosure. This brings a narrowness that again and again installs the will-to-power, the desire to control, to have things on our terms. However, the more we see that we are open, we have less sense of 'our terms' – life is as it is. If you go out and have a picnic with kids you do what everyone wants to do. Sometimes you get your way and sometimes they get their way; that is how it moves. It is pulsation isn't it? It's not an attempt at self-abnegation. And part of it is to know when to have your way and when to let other people have their way. However, there is no rule book that will show you how to do that, it comes through your belly, through being connected.

For example, if you are in a group and you are speaking, how do you find the rhythm of knowing when to speak? Very often if people are in their own heads they are so pre-occupied with what they want to say that they interrupt other people and then get a negative reaction. Then they

might say, *“Well, what is the point of me trying to talk as you guys don’t want to listen!”* “Well, we will listen but someone else was talking.” *“Yeah, it is always like that!!”* And it is always going to be like that if we cannot find the door, find the moment. Finding the moment, being in the pulse, being in the rhythm is revealed through not defending ourselves against it. And there is a basic trust in that; that there is enough to go around, that there will be time for everyone if we bide our time.

When we lose the pulse and swirl in our self-preoccupation there is often a drivenness that is a kind of anxiety: *“What about me? Will I get what I need?”* However, the more we relax and open we see that the one who needs something is a temporary arising. For example, when you wake up in the morning you need to have a pee. You then have a pee and you don’t need to have one again for a while; it is just like that. However, when you need to have a pee it is a good idea to have a pee. That is to say, there is an immediacy in the world but there is no truth in it. It doesn’t establish anything. Most of what we do doesn’t establish anything. If you have kids, they are changing and growing and you are changing and growing and that is what it is. It goes on for some years and then they go away – and that is what it is. What was it all about? It wasn’t about anything; there is no doggie bag, there is nothing to take home at the end of the experience. All you have got is whether you were there or not, because if you were there you got it. If you were there with them when they were very small you get that, and all through the stages, if you are there, that is what you get – and if you are not there you don’t get it.

Staying with the raw ingredients

Life is not a theory; it is not conceptually based. It is about taste, it is about the senses. So what is it then that allows us to be most in that state? It is not striving, not anxiety, not pushing but finding ourselves where we are, which is already ‘in it’, however it is. And the value of each moment ‘as it is’, is revealed through being there in that moment, not by making it special. Special is a very unhelpful notion because special is related to not special. Therefore, if you move towards the world with a categorisation, with an organising principle which is attributing value, what you will then be doing is looking for the things which have that particular value. Thus, it is about being with what things are, being with how it is, with your body as it is, your health as it is, your emotions as they are – just being open to that.

Therefore, if you are depressed you can be depressed. *“But I don’t want to be depressed.”* Well, the fact of not wanting to be depressed doesn’t stop the depression. It might get you some antidepressants but they probably won’t shift the structure of your depression. If you are depressed you can be with it. What is depression? It is something which moves in space and time. It is a mood. And if you stay present with it you can experience it as movement. But if you try to separate from it, it becomes something that gets you. It becomes an impediment, a monkey on your back, and you feel oppressed by ‘it’. However, ‘it’ is ‘you’, when you are depressed. So this is how I am. What is this? If we attend simply and openly to the point of restriction we will see that the form moves and changes while the one who attends, if relaxed, open and free of personal bias, remains as ungraspable awareness. The same applies when you are happy. To enquire “what is happiness?” doesn’t mean writing an essay about it for it is revealed by offering non-identificatory hospitality to it.

This goes back to the image of the mirror, in that the mirror is completely open to whatever is there. It is not limited or biased, it never says, *“I have had enough of this.”* Moreover, everything will go by itself. The Buddha’s basic teachings, the most basic and perhaps the most profound teachings, are about impermanence. That is to say, whatever is arising is also passing. Whether we think an experience is external or internal, it is changing. And because every experience is

always changing, each moment is ungraspable. Therefore grasping not very useful. That is pretty obvious. However, we spend so much of our lives trying to shape events as a means of appropriation, trying to get what we want. Of course we need to shape things. If you are going to cook a pizza you need to shape it. If you are going to bake a cake you need to shape it. If you are going to talk with kids and help them do their homework you have to shape that time. It is not shaping that is wrong in itself, for shaping is a dynamic way of interacting with the field one inhabits. However, if we use our ability to influence what is occurring as a method of generating 'my sense of who I am' then we become over-controlling. By focusing on our own agenda our attitude becomes self-referential and so too much is at stake in every situation. This is trying to squeeze butter out of the cow; the cow will give you milk then you have to do something with the milk to make the butter. That is to say, if you want to elaborate some big story for yourself you can do it but the universe doesn't give you that directly. The universe gives you the raw ingredients.

If you stay with the raw ingredients of immediate experience, infinite possibilities open up. However, if you are always already applying your own fixed recipe to whatever fresh ingredient occurs, your diet will become very limited and not many people will be able to eat with you. When we are retracted and become rigid, disappointment gives us a real whack, but when we relax into our spaciousness, disappointment is just a transient moment with no fundamental impact. Good times come and go and bad times come and go. Happiness comes and sorrow comes. Every possible event lies within the coming and going of the flow of experience. We are not the content of our mind and yet we are inseparable from the content of our mind. The content of our mind is experience, it is not self-definition, it is not essence. Thus, if you have bad times, these bad times don't define who you are. If you get a bit crazy for a while or you feel collapsed or worthless and life loses its meaning, if you can relax and be present with what's happening it will pass with less of a trace.

Therefore, it is very important not to feel too in charge. The worst punishment you can get in life is to feel that "*It is all up to me.*" That is a very sad and lonely place. Actually, our life is revealed through being with others. Our life comes to us; it is given to us when we make the gesture of welcoming it. And sometimes that is happy and sometimes it is sad but it is a revelation; it is not a thing you can hang onto. This is really the basic heart of the dzogchen teachings; that there are no things, there are only moments of ungraspable experience arising within the open field of awareness. And the more we see that we are integrated in open spaciousness the more the moments are fine just as they are. That is the basics.

Questions and responses

Are there any thoughts or questions you would like to raise?

Question: Sometimes there just seems to be an aspect of yourself that is you, like you were saying earlier. It is very easy to snap back to something you know that you are very comfortable with. How do you deal with those kind of persistent, let's say, aspects of yourself that do come out in your behaviour sometimes – and it's like: "*Oh... it is you again*"?

James: That is a very helpful question because there are two aspects there: something is arising *and* then there is an investment in it, an identification with it. For example, with something which seems a familiar part of oneself: "*I am just being me,*" there is a kind of merging *into* the thought and a sealing off: "*This defines who I am.*" Without stopping being like that, just by being present with it rather than collapsed into it, you start to experience its dynamic nature. That is to say, the

feeling, *"This is me,"* is both true and false. It is true in that this is how I am now in these circumstances, but it is not true in that this it defines 'who I really am'.

Thus, in the second aspect there is an over investment, the sense of fusion: *"Now I have found myself"* or *"This is what I am comfortable being."* People often say: *"Oh, I am not comfortable doing that."* However, a lot of life is not comfortable. And if you make comfort or happiness the basis of your existence there is a lot you have to get rid of. It is more helpful to consider, *"What am I sitting on? What is the ground or basis of my existence?"* If it is a thought, you sit in it for a while but then it vanishes and you are stuck in the air like one of those cartoons where the guy runs off the top of a cliff and his legs keep running till he suddenly falls. That is to say, whatever we fuse with is not going to last. However, it is not that we can push experience away and have nothing to do with it. Nor does it mean we have to be completely fused in it. It is about finding the middle way of being present, relaxed and open and working with how we are in the moment in this situation.

For example, say that you find that something is easy to do, but then later it seems more difficult. And when it is difficult it is just difficult. You might well feel that, *"I don't like this, I preferred how my life was 'before'."* At that moment you have gone up in a helicopter; you are up in your abstract conceptualisation: *"I have got an over-view: yesterday was good and today is bad. I don't want this, I need to have something else."* Then you can activate all the methods you know in order to change the situation, and then ...*"Ah, this is better!"* However, what you have done is to say, *"I am only safe if I am artificial. I cannot inhabit my life as it is; I can only inhabit the aspects I like."* That is like being a fussy kid of five who will not eat their dinner. Parents struggle in different ways to deal with that situation, but if they get into saying: *"OK you can have fish fingers everyday of the week and for breakfast too,"* that may not be so helpful. For if the child goes to someone else's house where the host does not want to cook fish fingers, what is the kid going to do? It is exactly the same structure isn't it? Therefore, it is quite a move to accept and indeed welcome things that from our habitual point of view, according to one aspect of ourselves, we don't want to welcome because we think: *"This isn't me. This doesn't fit. I don't like it."* It is better to relax and be flexible because our omnipotence is not going to last very long.

Question: How does your body change, how does it feel from your experience?

James: The body?

Participant: Yes as you experience it yourself as you practice.

James: There has been a move from a sense that my body is something that I have, to my body is something that I am, to not really having a body; that the body is part of my being in the world. So what I call 'my body' will be influenced by all sorts of things. For example, I am sitting in this particular chair which is a bit wobbly and so my back is not very supported. Therefore, I experience my posture in a particular way; some muscles are tensing and it is not so easy to keep my chest open. That is what happens; wherever we are, we are comfortable or uncomfortable, supported or not supported, and that is an aspect of our being a body in a world of forms.

If I have a notion of how I want my body to be then I might get very angry about the chair, feeling that it is attacking me. Or, I can experience: *"This is how my body is in this kind of chair."* I wouldn't necessarily want to sit in this chair forever but it also shows that the chair and the body are in the same world and that wherever we go our body is going to be moulded by circumstances. For example, when you meet people here, your body might relax and open or it might tense up if you are a bit wary. That kind of shift is happening all the time, a pulsing to and

fro like seaweed in the waves, opening and closing. In this way, my body is not something that I have but it is part of the dynamic field of experience that is unfolding as my existence.

Within the non-dual field of emergence we experience the rhythms of ourselves and of others. Sometimes our music is playing and the other person is dancing to it, and sometimes their music is playing and we dance to that. It alternates, flows, pulsates. So we need a quality of finesse to be present in the moment as we interact or co-become with the other. If you don't have too much inner loneliness or hunger, you can hear the rhythm of the other and can trust that their music is fine for a while, and then your music can come forward. There is enough space for the movement of leading and following to occur, and this frees us from the desperation of "What about me?"

We are just about at the end of our brief time together here. Maybe we could just sit quietly for a little, and we can do that on the basis of relaxing into the deep out breath. We don't need to make any sound, and thus this is something you can do in any situation. Just relax into the out breath and be with how things are.