

Transcript of `Depth and Light` Seminar

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Part 1

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Concept

The sea is changing. It's not reliable in the sense that we can't predict what bit of water is going to be there. The sea is there. When we use the term `sea` we use it as a term referring to something. Something that isn't actually there as a substance. The water is moving, but when we call it 'the sea', we catch it inside the concept and that generates the concept that there is something reliable and definable that we're talking about. You can't catch the sea, but you can catch the concept of the sea. In the same way you can't catch yourself. None of us here can know how we're going to be in five minutes time. We have no idea what precise thought is going to be arising for us. We don't know which part of our body is going to be registering some sensation. When I get there in five minutes time, it will be 'me', because `me` is like a little pot and I can put that experience into the pot. But of course, it's not really a pot. We can talk of the self as a container. But it's a concept. The concept is a mental function which creates the illusion of graspability.

To be here is not a concept, but to talk about it, is the realm of conceptual elaboration.

So, I have been in this building before. That's true and it's completely meaningless, because I recognize a few features of this building. When I was here before it was at a different time of the year. The quality of light was different, how the various items were set out was different, many of the people who were here then, are not here now, people who are here now, were not here then, but it's the same place. But this place is what we experience. This world reveals itself through our participation. To be here is not a concept, but to talk about it, is to transform it into the realm of conceptual elaboration. Probably very few things about my precise experience of this building are the same when I was here some years ago. The phenomena, the phenomenological field is different.

Concepts are a way of reassuring ourselves that we can make sense of what is going on

And the thing about the phenomenal world is, that it's incredibly rich and complex. Too much is going on for us to grasp, so we clump things into groups. So we say, in the room there are some women and there are some men. 'Woman` is like a kind of wrapper. Inside there are many different kinds of women. To say, these are women and these are men, doesn't really tell us very much. This use of concepts is a way of reassuring ourselves that we have the power to make sense of what is going on, that we can organise the field of direct experience into a pattern that give us a sense of agency and competence. So, when the texts say that there's anatman or dharma, that there's an absence of self or precise, defining essence of phenomena, this seems very strange, because it's not how we experience the world.

We live in a world of object constancy

I am wearing a blue shirt. It's quite easy to see that the shirt is blue. This is not a complex notion. You can see my blue shirt and that generates for you that you are sitting over there, looking at someone wearing a blue shirt. That is to say, that you are seeing an object that exists in the world,

by itself. The fact that I have a blue shirt has nothing particular to do with you. It has to do with me, because it's my blue shirt. The shirt is a thing. I am wearing this thing. So, it would appear that there is some essence or self-substance to what I'm wearing. And what you are entitled to do, is just notice it, after the fact that it is here already, formed as a blue shirt. And that's what we feel about everything else in the room. We see the mats on the floor, the chair by the window, the glass and so on. I see the things in the room. If I go outside and come back in, I don't expect the room to have turned into a field of bananas. Because we have a world of object constancy. And the stability of objects reassures us psychologically, that we're o.k. The world is stable, reliable and predictable.

Our part in the blue shirt

This view of the world, according to the Buddha's teaching is a sign of our ignorance. Ignorance means, we're ignoring something. What is it, we're ignoring? Not the blue shirt, because we see the blue shirt. What we're ignoring is our part in the experience of the blue shirt. From the buddhist point of view, ignorance means, the experience that there are self-existing phenomena. That you arrive after the fact. That you are attending to that which is already in existence.

Concepts support our assumptions

So, here in the front (of the room) are some flowers. The flowers are in a vase. They're there. We know what's going on. But, depending on where you're sitting in the room, you will have a different experience of the flowers. They are presented in three dimensions, there's an irregular pattern in the arrangement. So depending on where you're sitting, whether on the cushions on the floor or the chairs, your angle of vision meeting with the angle of display of the flowers, gives rise to your particular perception. Now, if you were going to art school, the first thing they would want to teach you, is to look. Don't draw or paint what you think, draw what you see. And when you try to do that, you find, that you don't really look very well. You imagine, you assume. And one of the ways in which we support our assumptions, is to say: „oh, there are two bunches of flowers at the front!“ By encapsulating whatever they are by this title, this rubric „a bunch of flowers“, we disguise the incredible complexity of what we are seeing, but more importantly, we allow ourselves to be lazy and asleep. The concept “bunch of flowers“ seals the object and seals the subject.

The concept as a done deal allows us to fall asleep

When you look at the flowers, you have different reactions, colours evoke pure aesthetic response, they evoke memories, they evoke a sense of how you might arrange flowers. These opinions are important because they are the first sense that the flowers are revealed to us through our participation. You get your bunch of flowers. You have no idea what flowers anyone else sees. You can imagine what someone else sees. That's your cogitation, your mental activity. In the precise moment of being alive and giving your attention to the flowers, your life and the potential of what is there, come together. All sorts of things could come to mind. You might think of some famous painters of flowers, like Fantin La Tour, you might have some memories of seeing still life painting of flowers in a museum. They might remind you of the flowers that were there at your mother's funeral. This is your life, not anyone else's life. So, if we deaden ourselves, the concept of „a bunch of flowers“ as a done deal, as a fixed situation, allows us to fall asleep.

The operational moment of my own conceptualization

What is there, is what I say is there. I tell the flowers, that they are flowers. As far as we know, flowers don't speak. We talk of the language of flowers because we use roses for some purposes,

chrysanthemums for another. These are our human concepts, our culture. We might say „oh there are some soft, green ferns.“ We say 'fern', we say 'green'. These are concepts, these are tools, which we use to apprehend 'something'. This is where it becomes interesting. When I say „this is a green fern“, I have taken hold of one aspect of what is there, or, at least, that's how it feels. I know what it is. I'm on to something. I know what it is, because I'm telling it what it is. So, when I'm able to catch the green fern, I feel as if I get what is there, but I got what is here (points to himself). I have caught the operational moment of my own conceptualization. Conceptualisation is an activity moving through space and time, a dynamic gesture which creates the illusion that I have arrived at some certainty about what is there. In Buddhism this is called delusion.

The child is learning to put the name on the object, as if it let`s them catch the object
It's not called illusion when you go to school. When you go to school it's called „well done, now you start to understand all the different things that grow in the world. We do a little bit of botany and we go for a little walk in the park and we say that is this bush and that is that tree. Now children, who can first identify the oak tree? Me, miss, I can! Mmh good. So, from the dharma point of view, the teacher is helping the students to be more stupid. So the child is learning to put the name on the object, as if it let`s them catch the object. That is an oak tree.

Relative truth - the field of compare and contrast

In Buddhism that is referred to as relative truth. Because in relation to what is called a pine tree, the oak tree is an oak tree, it is not a pine tree. The oak treeness of an oak tree is due to the field of compare and contrast. When the work of categorisation through Linnaeus and so on was set up, phenomena were set up in families, genres and species and so on. And this grouping together means, it's in this family and not in that family. So, we can definitely say, it's this, because it's not that. This is the work of concepts. It really helps to stay alive, if you can do concepts. We need concepts to participate in the ordinary world.

The eyes see light. The mind interprets what is there

But what Buddhism would suggest is, that concepts don't tell the whole truth of what is going on. They provide methods for catching and shaping moments of experience into patterns. So, when we look around the room, we see many different things. This is how it feels. When we look around the room, what we see is light. The eyes work with light. The eyes don't see tables and chairs. The eyes see light. The mind interprets what is there. The mind says 'blue shirt'. The blue shirt doesn't say 'blue shirt'. Because of the nature of your education you are familiar with the concept of 'blue shirt', the concept of 'blue'. It has become second nature to you to say 'James is wearing a blue shirt'. This is second nature, you weren't born with the notion of blue shirtedness. Gradually you have developed capacity to manipulate the concept of these regular patterns.

As we bring about the linguistic formation, we are calling into being that which we appear to be describing

This capacity for pattern formation allows you to make sense of the world. When you are doing this quickly and automatically, it's as if you are only identifying meaning that was already established in the world. Well, actually this requires your active participation. Moment by moment, we are telling the world what it is. Moment by moment, we are telling ourselves what we are. We say I'm happy, I'm sad, I'm this, I'm that. We think we are communicating about how we are. But as we bring about the linguistic formation, we are calling into being that which we appear to be describing. This is very important in the practise of meditation, particularly in Tantra and Dzogchen, which are both

concerned with energy.

The key limiting factors of our existence are not in the world of things, but in how we interpret what is going on

Energy is always in the here and now, unfolding, emergent and open to interpretation. From the buddhist point of view, this is why liberation, enlightenment or awakening is possible. Because the key limiting factors of our existence are not out there in the world of things, but in ourselves, in how we interpret what is going on. So, in terms of the general approach of Buddhism we would say, be attentive to the ethical quality of the colouration you bring to your interpretation. If a friend shows you, for example, their new shoes, you could be happy with them, that they have new shoes, or you could be very envious. If you become envious, your perception of the shoes will be very different. Well, it's ok for them, they've got nice pretty little feet, I've got big flat feet, I can't wear shoes like that. Then of course, you're not really seeing the shoes, you're elaborating a little drama in your head. And when you do meditation we become more aware of how tedious and shameful these little storylines, that run inside of us, are. What is the purpose of all this mental activity? From the point of view of the Buddha it's there to create prisons. You create limitation and suffering for yourself.

Internally split into the subject side of myself and the object side of myself

It feels very important to have your own opinion and idea, but the focus of your intention is always on finding the finite. When we operate in a concept dominated world, we are attending to the nuance of difference between this and that, putting them into hierarchical patterns. This is better than that and so on. And of course, when we look at ourselves we bring the same approach. I am like this, I like this, I don't like that. All these decisions and judgements that we make, that give the exquisite definition of our own profile, the topology of our existence. All of them are pointing at the fact, that I am knowable, I can find out what I'm up to. I can apprehend the shape of my existence. Essentially, I am a thing. I am internally split into the subject side of myself and the object side of myself.

The 'self' is a patterning of concepts that don't describe a core essence or substantial existentiality

So we find out things about ourselves, certain habits. I notice, that I don't do some things that I should do. I'm going to have to struggle if I want to change. An internal dialogue. You can't have a dialogue with only one point. Sometimes a dialogue collapses into a monologue and you're just into a rant and then you recognise what you're doing and you go back to dialogue. Because, as we learn in childhood, if you can't keep an eye on yourself, you'll get into trouble. Look before you leap. If you get your pocket money on Sat. morning and you spend it all at once, then you won't have any for the rest of the week. You have to plan ahead. You have to think of what you might want on Mo., not just of what you want today. These are very helpful things that parents say. But they're creating the architectonics, the internal shaping of the domain of the felt sense of self. I need to be in charge of my life. I have a life. I might need to be in charge of my bicycle, so that I won't crash. But, how do I get to be in charge of my life? It's not existing as a thing. But, because we can conceptualize it as if it were a thing, this gives us the illusion of power. So, the 'self' is a patterning of concepts. Concepts that don't describe a core essence or substantial existentiality, but concepts which create, generate, which manifest the illusion of an essential self. My individuality is composed of ideas. I think myself into existence.

If I don't think, will I cease to exist?

If I don't think, will I cease to exist? Well, we cease to exist as a thing. Which, from a buddhist point of view, is very good news. Because we have been a thing. Thingness is an illusion. What we have is experience. So, this room is light. We look around and we are in a field of light. How it is revealed to us, depends on a kind of filter which we install between our open awareness and the actuality of the light. The function of the meditation is to put into question or deconstruct the reliance on interpretive concepts.

We live in the dualistic perception of living in an environment that is other than us, which creates wear and tear, but mind is always fresh

In the buddhist tantric and Dzogchen, Mahamudra literature you find a lot of reference to the original wisdom or the original clarity of the mind. There, it is said to be there from the very beginning. Yet it hasn't become old, because it's fresh. That is to say, awareness is not something within time. As we come into the season of autumn, we experience the shifting turn of time. The length of the days, the amount of moisture, the early morning dew and so on. These are all markers, that the summer is fading. We look in the mirror and we see that we get older. We see the wear and tear on our skin of just being alive. Because we live in the dualistic perception of living in an environment that is other than us and this creates friction, which creates wear and tear. But the mind is always fresh.

The glow coming from the inside is a symbol of the freshness of each moment

In many of the descriptions of Padmasambhava for example, a great inspirational form of meditation in Tibet, he's described as being eight years of age, with a very soft and glowing complexion. Clearly meditation is the best skin cream available. Because you have the glow coming from the inside. So, this is a symbol of the freshness of each moment. We have the clarity of what is here. In that first vibrant moment where there's just light and there's – this!

From the point of view of meditation the most interesting thing is this very first quality of dawn

The traditional example for this is the dawn. Especially if you're out in the country, it's a dark night without much moon and there's just the first light in the sky. In the dark there is a sameness. And if you can accept the dark, you feel an equanimity, because there's a non-differentiation. And as the rays of light come from the sun, although the sun is still beneath the horizon, gradually there's a lightening of the thick texture of darkness and differentiation starts to occur. In the dark there's nothing much for the mind to hold on to, which is why, when you're out in the forest on a dark night, you can make yourself quite scared, because you can fill the darkness with your own fearful imaginings. But as the light spreads with the advent of dawn, 'oh, it's a tree, it's a cow'. Now you can make sense of what's here. From the point of view of meditation the most interesting thing is this very first quality of dawn, before you have enough differentiation to give your conceptual mind hooks to grasp onto. You can't know what's there, because there aren't enough supports for conceptual elaboration. But what you can do is look and if you look without conceptualizing, you receive what is here and this is the clarity of the mind.

The light of the mind also shows itself as the light of the object

Clarity here doesn't mean all bright and shining in all different colours. It means that, instead of

being caught or seduced by the differentiation of the object, the mind itself is the illuminator. This is the natural light of the mind. The light of the mind also shows itself as the light of the object. But the light of the mind comes first. So, in the various types of meditation we can practice, we start to loosen our reliance on conceptual interpretation., so that we can be here with the raw freshness of the world, before we start cooking it according to our own karmic or neurotic recipes. Within that field of clarity, many things are moving.

Elaboration is not required for oneself, but it's available as compassion

When we're at home in this spacious, open base, which shows itself as the field of clarity, we don't need to make sense of what's going on, because it is meaningful the way it is. This is what's referred to as the absolute truth. The intrinsic meaning or value which is just here. So then elaboration or the development of interpretation is not required for oneself, but it's available as compassion to bring connectivity with others. Because we start to have some space in ourselves. So, we say how are you? Then I have some space to receive how you are.

This world is beyond computation

Often we're telling other people how they are, even before we've asked them how they are. Oh, you look a bit down, is everything ok? So, we've already captured the person into our matrix of interpretation. This blocks the space for the potential for the other person from unfolding. What is this world? It's like the bunch of flowers. It's beyond computation. (You can't apply arithmetic to it.) It's excessive. It's the richness of lived experience. But the open clarity of mind welcomes it. As it is. All of it. Now. Not having to cut it up into little pieces, to make collages according to our habituated interpretation.

Unfolding aspects of oneself

So, this is the practice of non-violence. The gate of our welcome to the other is very big. Come as you are. And you have the time and space to unfold yourself. Like the curtain which is bunched together, there's an unfolding. When you pull the curtain out, it's all available. The curtain isn't split or fragmented or divided, but it's enfolded. The same way, when we grow up in our family, we become aware of the personalities of the big people who we're dependent on. And we learn to fold aspects of ourselves back onto ourselves. When your dad comes home from work, don't make too much noise. When mom is in this mood, better hush.... This is how we get folded in. We need space to unfold. The whole of samsara is a folding in. When you look at the curtain when it's folded in, it's quite difficult to see how big it will be when it's folded out. So you have to imagine and this is part of the difficulty of our human situation. We find it difficult to show ourselves, because we feel there are aspects of ourselves which unacceptable. We hide ourselves in folds and we meet other people who hide themselves in folds. And then we imagine things about them, which are hidden in their folds. And so communication becomes very difficult, because we start with what's an acceptable image. How do I need to be in order to survive in this world and have people like me and so on and so forth. So, we're second guessing other people's expectations of what is appropriate. In order to do this, we have to look up our predictive manual.

Potential requires space

Our predictive manual was given us in our family when we were growing up. It's quite useful for reading the patterns of our family, but it's not a very good guide to the big, wide world. But to learn to do new things is quite difficult. So, we tend to do more of what we've done before. This is the development of a personality. My shape, my style, my way of doing things. We meet someone, we

fall in love and say 'I will be predictable for you, if you will be predictable for me'. Ah, at last I met someone and I know where I am. I feel really safe with you, because I know how you are. This is the welding together of two prisons, because our potential has not been visited. For the potential to unfold, it requires space. Which means not filling the space with interpretation, assumption, judgement and so on.

The field of experience and our awareness is truly individual, which means undivided

I exist. Everyone here can say that of themselves: I exist. This isn't wrong or bad. When it says we don't have a self, it doesn't mean we don't exist. 'I exist' is the voice of the empty mind. The spacious mind, the unborn mind. It is the vitality of the radiance of the emergence of awareness, like the sun coming up in the sky. It has no fixed content. We become aware that we're filled with all sorts of experiences. As the illusory skin that we have around ourselves dissolves, instead of meeting the world by going from inside to outside, we have the non-duality of arising with the world. We are always somewhere. This is the co-emergence of the field of experience and our individual awareness. It is truly individual, which means undivided. Because it is empty.

The creativity of the mind itself arises as a delusion

You can't cut emptiness. Bodies can be cut, emotions can be cut, hopes and fears can be cut, but awareness is the basic clarity, receptivity of the mind, it is not a thing. And this is our actual nature, hidden from us by our own conceptualization. When it says in Buddhism that all obscurations, limitations and suffering arises from ignorance, it means the process of ignoring and who is the one who is ignoring. I am ignoring the ground of my own being, by using the thoughts and feelings and sensations which arise as the basis for weaving my patterns of interpretation. The creativity of the mind itself arises as a delusion.

You can catch the carapace of concepts

There is no truth to the delusion. So, as the texts say in many different examples, it's like a rainbow in the sky, like a mirage on the road on a hot day, like the reflection of the moon on water. There is no truth there. It is an illusory appearance. When we relax and open to the ground nature of the mind itself, the unformedness or openness of ourself is inseparable from its graspability. That is to say, we can never find ourselves, but we are ourselves. So as long as we tilt toward appropriation, longing for things we like, pushing away what we don't like, treating ourselves as a thing, we're simply maintaining our own alienation. This is one of the great mysteries of existence. The mind itself is unborn. That is to say, it hasn't come into existence as thing. And yet it's unceasing, because the flow of experience is continuous. You can't catch the mind itself, because there's nothing there, nor can you catch the flow of experience because it's always just rippling through.

If you wrap yourself in thoughts, it gives you a kind of rough solidity, a seeming predictability, a rigidification, which is a great loss

What you can catch is the carapace of concepts.

Some of you may know the story of Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*. Who wants to wake up as a bug? It's not much fun. We have the soft stuff on the outside. Very sensitive. If someone says, would you rather have a shell?, you say – no, I want the soft stuff! That's how it is with the mind. It's very soft, very tender. Of course you have to be careful with your skin. In the same way, if you wrap yourself in thoughts, it gives you a kind of rough solidity, a seeming predictability. But this

sclerosis, this rigidification is really a great loss.

So, in the practice we return to the sweet freshness of the unfolding experience moment by moment. Which unites the original, unchanging purity of the mind, with the ceaseless revelation of its own vitality, which is the field of its own experience, coming as light, sound and so on.

This is just an introduction to this topic and for those who are interested, in the coming days will be looking into this in some depths. It's also an area which is addressed in many of the chapters of the book of the collected writings of C.R.Lama, now available in Germany. Because all dharma comes in transmission. We receive some teaching, then we have to practice it to make it come alive in us.

Lineage

I got many teachings from C.R. Lama in this third level of transmission which is through the ear of ordinary people. That is to say, we have to hear these things again and again and gradually they sink in and permeate our being. He got it from his teacher and he from his teacher and going back and back and back, up to his first incarnation and back to the time of Padmasambhava, Garab Dorje and back to the founding Buddha of the lineage, Kuntu Zangpo. The notion of lineage is very, very important in Tibetan Buddhism, because the purity of the lineage is a prophylactic against reliance on human thought.

Why Buddhism is a kind of narcissistic wounding

When western people come into contact with the teaching it is a kind of narcissistic wounding, because in our view from our Judaeo-Christian heritage, we are special people, God's chosen people and from the modern atheist tradition, we are the intelligent creatures who can run around and destroy the world.

With science we are the kings of creation and with consumer capitalism we are the kings of destruction. But anyway, we are kings and queens.

It's not like that in the Buddhist account. In this account in this world that we live in there are six different domains. Humans is the middle level. Lower middle class, not kings and queens. Above us are god realms. But we have to hustle and work and so on and we don't know very much. To be human doesn't mean to be on the peak of the mountain. Though modern science and the whole turn on modernity is always projecting into the future and saying we can overcome all difficulty. Buddhism isn't saying that at all. Buddhism says: from the very beginning there was the truth spoken by Kuntu Zangpo. This is the truth not dependent on concepts. It is prior to concepts. It is the mother, the ground or the source of concepts.

The mother is always bigger than the child. The concept can't catch the ground, the ground is always the basis of the concept. So it's not about imagining new futures or finding our own way. It's about finding our way in the way. Not getting in the way of the way by trying to establish our own way. So in the first two chapters of this book of collected writings by C.R. Lama he says on several occasions that this teaching is not contaminated by human thought. Now some people in radical ecology would say that indeed human beings are like some demonic viruses and the best thing would be if we would all just vanish and let the bugs and cows get on with it. That's why it's a bit of a narcissistic wound.

Pre-conceptual awareness, pre-conceptual clarity is the gift of the lineage to us

All my personal qualities are not very important. The ground of these qualities, that's what's important. But I don't find the ground of the qualities, the nature of the mind itself, because I'm so caught up in the qualities that manifest from the ground. So, meditation is a deconstruction of the central, dominant position given to the intellect. The intellect as the master of thought. In meditation

we learn to pay less and less attention to thoughts. Through that we awaken to pre-conceptual awareness, pre-conceptual clarity. And this is the gift of the lineage to us. Because we won't find it taught in any of our schools. It's not on the television, it's not in novels. This is a rare and precious tradition. So, here we have a chance to go deeper into that. It's not about doing something artificial, but rather recognising the artificiality, at times painful artificiality of our self-construct.

The advantage of doing the practise is that we experience more freedom, more freshness, more spontaneity, with the diminishing of fear and anxiety. So, maybe some of these ideas are interesting or helpful for you and if you're interested there is plenty of time to go deeper. Good evening.

Dzogchen indicates a great or complete origination which requires nothing to be done to it

So, the focus we're going to have is on some parts of this teaching from a teacher by the name of Chetsangpa. And it's a teaching on Dzogchen. Dzogchen indicates a great or complete origination which requires nothing to be done to it. Clearly, Berlin is not in a state of completion. There is building work going on all the time. People have many ideas of how to develop the city. And all through our lives we are developing and changing. We identify aspects that need to be improved. Sometimes that's because we have an inner feeling that we're not quite right. And sometimes it's because the outer circumstances have changed in a way that means that, how we are, is not going to fit the new environment.

What do we need, what's going to be most useful

There are many different styles of practise in Buddhism, all very interesting. So, there's the question, what do we need, what's going to be most useful? So it's often said, we shouldn't see the dharma as a musk pot and see the teacher as a musk deer and see yourself as the hunter. We're used to hunting. We go shopping and we hunt for something which will be just right. We try to find something that will suit our sense of what is right. This way of turning the dharma into a marketable commodity is seen as very unhelpful. Because in our ordinary sense of self, we may not be very clear about what we actually need. So, rather it's recommended that we see the teacher or the presentation of the lineage as a doctor and that the dharma is the medicine. And we are the patient. So the first thing is - what is wrong with us? If the patient can't say anything to the doctor, the doctor has to work it out. If you're in a car crash, you're unconscious and you arrive in the hospital, the doctor makes his decision. I don't think we're quite in that state. We are the walking wounded. So we have to be able to think and speak about what is wrong with us.

By reflecting on our existence, we can find out more about how we suffer

Buddhism begins with the idea of suffering. So, by reflecting on our existence, we can find out more about how we suffer. Some people suffer a lot because they are mistrustful, they become suspicious of other people's intentions. Some people suffer a lot from disappointment, that their life hasn't developed the way they want it to be. This can include being susceptible to physical and or mental disturbances. We may have had plans of what we wanted to do, but find that our physical health is not sufficient to let us carry it through. Generally speaking our suffering is a kind of frustration. That is to say, that there's a disjunction between subject and object. Other people don't behave in a way we want them to behave, we don't get the success we wanted at work. This is when outer objects and our idea or desire don't come together. But we also have a sense of an inner object, that we can be disappointed in ourselves. We might have decided that we want to do meditation practise, but then find that we don't actually do it. We work hard to set up the conditions to make such practise possible, but then we're carried away by our distractions.

So the inner objects of our thoughts seem to catch us and take us somewhere else. So here we see, with inner objects or with outer objects, the subject as intention or desire or commitment, finds itself unable to constellate the object factors in an alignment with its own intention.

From the early days of the Buddha's presence in the world there were traditions that made the predictions, the teachings would last for five periods of five hundred years. And in 1956 there were big celebrations in India because it was the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's teaching. But if you're following the logic of the prediction, we're actually celebrating the end of the buddhist teaching. What does this mean? We can see two factors: one, we can see that the countries that maintained the tradition in a fairly balanced and regulated way, these countries have all been greatly disturbed by political and economic change. The beneficial side to that is, due to that disturbance Dharma has come to the West and we are able to find out something about it. However, our life is very complicated in the West. There are many, many more distractions around for us than there would be in a traditional village in Tibet.

Consumerist capitalism works on the basis that the answer lies in the object

Consumerist capitalism endlessly provides us with an array of choices. It presents new objects, which seem to be fascinating and of real value. Consumerist capitalism works on the basis that the answer lies in the object. You will be completed if you have this product. It will give you what you need. That is to say, the completion can arrive by the addition of something onto you. You find that you have a lack and this wonderful product will fill that lack, so that you feel ok. Our entire advertising system operates on that principle. And especially also, to try create a sense of lack. So we look out and it's very easy to feel, what is wrong with me, is the absence of the people, or the skills or the possessions which will make me complete.

The paradigm of lack and gain

The early buddhist capitalist compartment developed also a branding system for this. If you want to get enlightened you have to gather the two accumulations. You have to have merit and you have to have wisdom. We have many products which you can make use of in order to get merit. You can build a stupa. You can feed monks. You can burn butterlamps. And because this is a buddhist capitalist structure, they have a special way of increasing the rate of return, because each time you accumulate some merit, you give the merit away to other people and then you get back twice as much. This is a skilful way of teaching that allows us to think what is the paradigm of lack and gain is the nature of the dharma path. Accumulation means that things are gathered together and held as enduring substances through time. So, if you're doing a ritual offering you have a 'tsog', you have gathered together liquids and food and so you offer these to the Buddhas and then you eat some of them yourself. In the same way 'tsog' is used to describe these accumulations. Something which is gathered. And when we gather, we collect what we need and we reject the rest. So, the issue is to be clear what is beneficial and what is not.

The practises related to relative truth

When you're a child and you go out, especially this time of the year, you still have blackberries growing wild in the brambles. And your parents have to introduce you to the fact that there are some wild berries you eat and others not, because they're poisonous. There's a big difference. You can't do it just on the colour or just on the shape. You have to learn the diagnosis through signs, qualities, what is useful and what is not. And a lot of our life is spent doing that.

But then the question is what are the criteria by which we find that out. So, if we go back to this image of the dharma as medicine.... I need medicine because my life is not quite right. So, medicine is quite clearly something which is not me, which when it operates inside me helps me to be better. When we get sick we become aware that we're not self-regulating and that we're not self-sufficient. Some imbalance occurs in us, however we read that, in terms of the five elements or the biochemical system. Then we need something other, something not me, to rebalance ourselves. Generally this describes the practises that relate to relative truth.

Most dharma teaching is concerned with antidotes

Relative truth means the understanding of this, in relation to that. So we can say that today the air is cooler than yesterday. Which is how we make sense of what is happening. We hold on to the idea of yesterday, although yesterday clearly has vanished, but we can allow yesterday to leave some traces, which is our felt sense, our embodied memory of how the weather was then and then we look and feel how it is now. The outer factors change, the inner factors change and so we put this in relation to that. But the fact is that we're not self-sufficient and so we find ourselves having to be in relation to the world. We have some small capacity to act on the world, but largely the world is acting on us. The world influences how we are. I'm not complete in myself. So, there are many dharma paths that are about making fine judgements and re-balancing of ourselves. And this is the path of antidotes. And most dharma teaching is concerned with antidotes.

In a materialist culture the mind is generated out of matter

Generally speaking Dzochen is not concerned with antidotes. It's concerned with how to stay open to the experience of whatever is occurring. So, first of all as a preparation, we start to think and see what is the true nature of our problem? This is where our traditional western view and the buddhist view are very different. Generally speaking in the West we live in a materialist, fairly atheist culture, that is to say, that the mind is generated out of matter. The brain is the centre of our being, we come into existence through the sexual contact of our parents, which allows the development of the brain, which generates the qualea, the felt subjective experience of consciousness and then we die. And when we die, the brain dies and consciousness dissolves. Which means if you're good at exploiting and cheating other people, then if you don't get arrested, when you die you get away with it. Because if you're able, as many people seem to be able, (to believe) that harming others is beneficial, then when you die you can feel that you had a good life.

Buddhism says the mind is not an entity

The buddhist view is very, very different. Buddhism says the mind is infinite, it is not an entity. It has no beginning and it has no end. What the mind shows, has beginning and end. We experience thoughts, memories, sensations. These arise and pass within the mirror-like, open, spacious mind. Due to this, when the body dies, the mind itself doesn't die. The particular patterns of thoughts and experiences, memories. will dissolve, but the ground out of which experiences occur will continue. From this particular view, death is sad because all the experiences and ideas we have accumulated

are lost. This illusory palace of our personal existence dissolves. We enter into the bardo stages and then we take birth in another dimension and have to find our way how to survive there. Which we do for a while and then that dissolves. So, in the first chapter of 'Simply Being' there's a lot of descriptions of the different realms and what happens there. It's very useful to reflect on this, because we are quite committed to our existence. This feels like me.

This 'me-ness' feels as if it's guaranteed by some internal essence, but in fact it arises due to causes and circumstances

We know that the relations between men and women can be quite difficult. If you have a male body, it's sometimes quite difficult to work out what women want and women seem to also find it quite difficult to find out what men are about. Now, men and women are not so different. When we go out in the garden we see the little birds hopping about. Can you imagine what it's like to be a bird? Not having hands, you're coming head first all the time and if you want to eat something you have to put your nose in right close to it. That's very scary, because you have no protection and these very vulnerable eyes are now very close to something which could cause trouble to you. So, we see that birds are usually quite paranoid. They're either paranoid or stupid like the fat pigeons. Some of you may have done the Dzogchen practise of Ruzhen, where you make these explorations of how it might be to be in the other realms. These are ways of deconstructing our sense of total identification with the sense that this is me. Because this 'this is me-ness' feels as if it's guaranteed by some internal essence. But in fact of course it arises due to causes and circumstances.

I arise in dependent co-origination

As I get older I come to the period of when many people I know start to die. People I've known for many years and I knew them when they were young and healthy and I see them and know that they're now in hospital and then I go to their funeral. I also will die. This feels impossible. How could I die. I've always been here. Being here is what I do, because we feel as if we're coming from the inside out. There will always be more of me. We're held in place by the interaction of many different factors. People slip in the shower and bang their head, there are car crashes, train crashes, plane crashes, there are blood clots, cancers, endless numbers of ways of dying. Because life is a very subtle balancing. And the factors which can cause unbalancing are many. The 'me-ness of me' as what establishes the identity of what I take to be me, this is not established from something inside me, it's not in the palm of my hand. I arise in dependent co-origination.

What is happening around us is not very far from ourselves, it comes right inside us

Due to certain factors and conditions of when we were growing up we have certain capacities in our body. So, I was born just after the war and I belong to a group of people, certainly in Scotland, who have very bad teeth, because during the war, there was rationing. The food had to come from outside Britain and there were many submarines trying to sink the food ships and so on. So they didn't import too much sugar, so the children didn't get to eat very many sweets, so they had good teeth. And growing up after the war, everybody was celebrating with a sugar festival. They were always giving sweets to the children, so then I got many holes in my teeth. What is happening around us is not very far from ourselves, it comes right inside us. The structure of our body. So, then we see, death comes easily, because the factors which constitute us are impermanent.

Having been born into a human body, a particular vision of this world arises for us

Being human is one of the many, many possibilities where the mind can manifest. In Tibetan there are two main terms which they use to describe us. We're described as *semchen*, that is to say, 'having mind' and we're described as *drolwa*, 'movers', creatures on the move. This is what we see, snails and bugs, all these different animals, everything is moving. Building nests, digging holes, finding food and they do this on the basis that there is a mind which formulates intentions. Something seems very important. Some things feel important just for human beings and they wouldn't be important for dogs. Things which are important for dogs are not necessarily important for human beings. Having been born into a human body, a particular vision of this world arises for us.

The world is revealed to us, through the particularity of our embodiment

You can see that different creatures have different relations with the world, just through their embodiment. We know that dogs have a range of hearing, which we don't have access to. We know that many creatures can smell a range of meaning in ways we can't. Different kinds of ants communicate chemically. If you imagine trying to be a lobster. It's a very hard edge trying to claw things. In the claws there are not so many nerve endings. But in the tips of our fingers, we have so many nerve endings that allow us to have the most delicate touch. These are not just interesting facts about other creatures, these are ways of understanding that the world is experience, because the world is revealed to us, through the particularity of our embodiment. And that easily changes with time.

What we take to be the integrity of ourselves is not established by our own will, but by luck.

For example in Afghanistan, there were many land mines put down, particularly in the Russian war. Many children lost legs and you can see documentaries about them with their little wooden crutch moving around. The culture there is not as politically correct as in Western Europe. So, if you're a cripple, you're a cripple. It is not high status. People laugh at you, because you don't have a leg. You can't really play football very easily. You have become less than. You didn't ask for the war, you didn't invent the land mine, but now you've only got one leg – difficult to get work. You don't look the same as other people, you are less than. This is what we see all over the world. What we take to be the integrity of ourselves is not established by our own will power or our intelligence. It's a matter of what we could generally, call luck or, according to Buddhism, our karma.

We, operating in this opaque world of obscurity, have no memory of the causal situations

So, this is a very interesting area, because if there are so many factors operating on our life, it can seem a little bit random. So we say, oh, this boy is very unlucky because he had his leg blown off. It's a terrible accident! Why do these things happen? And then we might say, oh enchallah! God wills these things, we don't know why. It is written in the book at the beginning of time. It's either the will of God or just bad luck. Buddhist and Hindus have a different reading. They say, no, it arises in consequences to actions we ourselves have generated in previous existences. There are no accidents. Everything arises from causes and conditions. But we, operating in this opaque world of obscurity, have no memory of the causal situations. Something happens and we don't know why.

Letting the Greeks experience suffering will let them become proper northern Europeans

Why is the greek economy a mess? Because the greek people are lazy. That's one explanation. Another one is that it's due to the European Central Bank, for welcoming them into the Eurozone. Because our great leaders don't understand the difference between politics and economics. Political membership of the EU means, very disparate economies are brought together. So, we all hold hands in a circle and say we are European. But some Europeans are richer than others. How did this happen? Surely we should change this. Ah, but how can we help people who are very lazy. That's why we can't allow the Greeks to get away with their debt. Here in Germany people work hard for what they have. And we do it even when it's raining. The greek people don't have enough rain. They have too much sunshine, they're just too happy. So, we're letting them experience suffering and that will let them become proper northern Europeans. This sounds like madness, but I think it's a large part of the view which is driving the economic relations at the moment. So then a few men in suits in a backroom can destabilize countries. The cost of food in the shops in Greece is being determined not by who is growing vegetables in the garden.

How karma manifests

So, when we look at it from our modern realist point of view, we say, oh, surely we're intelligent enough to solve these problems. We accept that many variables are operating, but if we all sit, we come up with a good solution. But somehow it doesn't arrive. People try their best, but things still get in a mess. This is because there are these invisible rivers of causality flowing under the surface. Factors that are impinging, that operative and yet are so intangible, that we can't see them with our rational mind. This is how karma manifests. We find ourselves engaged in situations.

A perspex wall of who is friend and who is enemy

If you turn on the television, you see every day the destruction of Aleppo. The hospitals are being directly attacked. They're being directly attacked by people with arms and legs, who have mothers and fathers and may well have children, who go home and play football with their kids, having dropped bombs on a hospital. How is this possible? Because they have some perspex wall in their mind. Here are the friends and here are the enemies. But in Syria now there are so many ways of defining who is friend and who is enemy. This situation is out of control. So we watch this with the same kind of shame that we had in previous years in Srebrenica, the way these horrible situations are established. We are so powerful and at the same time completely powerless. This is how we can start to feel the nature of karma, the ego's fantasy of world domination and world control.

The protestant, value driven orientation has driven the whole modernist, capitalist procedure

When the United Nations troops go into a country, it doesn't necessarily help. When there was the massacre in Ruanda, there were United Nations soldiers there. If the World Bank comes to visit your country, you should feel very afraid. This means, we don't know what we're doing. This is why the beginning of ethics is 'do less, not more'. Now we're preparing for the great anniversary of Martin Luther. Martin Luther says, you have to do! God expects of you that you do your best. Salvation is up to you. And this protestant, value driven orientation has driven the whole modernist, capitalist procedure.

The first rule in ethics is 'do no harm, then do some good if you can'

Indeed we should our best, but what does it mean to do your best? The first rule in ethics is 'do no harm, then do some good if you can'. How can we do no harm? We have to be able to see what are

the consequences of my action. This is what human beings are very, very bad at. We go into a little bubble, put on the blinkers and then we push and then – oh my God, what's happened? Saddam Hussein is a bad man, if you get rid of the bad man, everyone will be very happy. Colonel Quaddafi is a bad man, if we get rid of the bad man, everyone will be very happy. It's not like that, we don't know what we're doing. So, this is the basis for the buddhist practise. We're very intelligent and we're very stupid.

Spend more time looking inside than looking outside

So, we have to help our intelligence to be more powerful than our stupidity. And paradoxically the way to do that is with humility. In general, the essential practise in Buddhism is Refuge. And refuge essentially means: I'm lost, I don't know what I'm doing, please help me. I'm wandering in Samsara. I have many ideas, but I don't know what's true and false. So, this is how we develop faith in the dharma. By accepting, the Buddha could see things we couldn't see. And on the basis of his deep insight, he said, spend more time looking inside than looking outside. Because if you don't know what you're up to, how are you going to know what is the basis of your transaction out into the world.

How can you check out if you're mind is stinking?

So, when we say I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, what do we want protection from? From ignorance and the consequences of ignorance. And where will we find this ignorance? Inside us. So, I need refuge from myself. Then we have to be able to check out what is healthy and what is not healthy. On the outer level, in terms of the body, that's not so difficult. Do I need a bath. Oh yeah :) , so you can check these outer things quite easily. How can you check out if you're mind is stinking? That's more difficult. Which is why we do meditation practise. Because it allows us to stay with our thoughts long enough for the full flavour to show itself :) because usually we're running very quickly, we're flowing with our thoughts and we don't really see what we're up to. So, by calming the mind, we start to be able to investigate what is going on. So, we're taking a break now and then we'll be moving into the text.

The rarity of this benign situation

In the first section of this text by Chetsangpa, he also comments on the condition of the precious human birth, which is our very rare chance to practise dharma. Many people don't come into contact with dharma at all in their life. Even if we come into contact dharma, we can mix it with our own ideas. Or it can exist as a vague idea and if it's vague idea, it's not going to be very functional, So, by reflecting on the rarity of this benign situation, it's an encouragement to do one's best with it.

Don't be concerned with the fantasy of planning and control

When you're out on the street, you see people going about their business. What they're doing isn't bad, but from a dharma point of view, it's a little bit lost. It's like living in a land where there's gold strewn all over the surface of the earth and being focused on collecting leaves. Life goes by very quickly. So then he describes, how one should practise renunciation, to go in a country where noone knows your name, where you have no obligations, so that you're free to practise and to not concern yourself with the worldly situation. And again, he says whatever comes, comes. That is to say, don't be concerned with the fantasy of planning and control. The power you can have by being able to control circumstances is very different from the flexibility to be able to respond to whatever occurs.

Responding to circumstances keeps us in a much more intimate relationship to the world. And it means that your impulse or your intention is not activated until the environmental conditions show themselves.

The position of the Bodhisattva is to be the servant

Buddhism is not evangelical. It doesn't set out to convert other people. It works on the basis of if people are interested. Because the interest has to arise and ripen from people. So, right from the time Buddha Shakyamuni awakened under the bodhi tree, he had hesitation about teaching. And many people and also the gods came and asked him to teach, but he was very reluctant. He wasn't a diva, but rather seeing, are the conditions ripe for conveying this understanding. It wasn't a monologue coming out of him, but sensing if the causal conditions are ripe then we can participate. Unfortunately the patriarchal, phallic structure of power tends to insist in most organisations. Which means then, you get a top down dominance, with the people at the lower level, having to conform with the people at the top. But the position of the Bodhisattva is to be the servant. And as you will know, there are three ways that are traditionally described as ripening as a Bodhisattva. One is to gain enlightenment and then in the manner of a leader bring other beings to enlightenment. The other is in a manner of a companion, to go with all sentient beings. And the third modality is to go more like a shepherd, letting the flock go ahead, so that we become the last ones to enter enlightenment. That's how we are in the service of others. And the servant doesn't determine the menu, the servant asks 'what would you like, what do you need?' I will become what is required by you. This is very different from saying 'I know the truth and you need to kiss my ass'.

At first we learn by copying, eventually we have to stand on our own feet

So, we need to be aware of this, because power is something for us all to think about in relation to dharma. How to have clarity which is in the service of other people. Because, in order to awaken, people have to be fully present in themselves. At first, generally we learn by copying, but eventually we have to stand on our own feet. Dzogchen, in particular, is lonely because you sit with your own mind. And moment by moment you alone can work out who you are with what is arising for you. So you have to have the authority, confidence and the clarity to see clearly what needs to be done. The teachings can help this process, but when not well structured, the teachings can also encourage a kind of infantilised regression.

So one of the functions of renunciation he is talking about is not getting lost in monasteries. C.R. Lama, my teacher used to say that one of the main functions of monasteries was to stop men going out raping and killing. Lock them inside vows, shave off their hair, put on some clothes that were like a warning sign, saying 'holy men don't touch'. Because you can get lost in dharma as well.

Participate as a dreamlike figure, without taking things too seriously

As many texts say, if you're in a prison where the bars are made of gold, you're still in a prison. So you yourself with your dignity, with your alertness have to evaluate how to live. We both have to align ourselves with the dharma, but also be fresh moment by moment, responding to circumstances. And there's a tension between these two positions, where we have to learn to inhabit and balance. So, when he's saying we have to renounce the world and not spend all our time getting caught in worldly activities, the outer form of this is to live very simply in a hut and do practise all the time. And if we get a chance to do that for some of the time, that's good. On an inner level this means, seeing that this world is like a dream. So one participates as a dreamlike figure, without taking things too seriously. Because seriousness is the quality of ignorance. All the dharma

teachings, including the Theravadins, point out, there's no solid substance to anything.

Theatre

Moreover, events have no deep continuity, no deep duration, they arise and pass. So, when we go to work, it's in a manner of theatre. We go into an institution, you have a role with certain tasks to perform. You have to salute some people who are above you, you have to instruct some people who are below you. It doesn't mean that these people are really above you, it doesn't mean that these people are truly below you. This is theatre. It is as if. If you are in charge of a meeting, you say when to start and to stop. And then you go home and on the way home you have to wait for the bus. And the driver decides to stop, or not. Certainly in London, if the driver is in a bad mood, he just goes by :-). Nobody is the king or the queen all the time. So, when it's our time to be the boss, it's theatre. We say the sort of things a boss has to say. I've been reviewing your performance and I'm not very happy. You need to do this. Who is speaking in that moment? If we hear the emptiness of our own words, then we say 'you have to improve', the other person looks a bit anxious. We say, if you don't improve, you lose your job. I don't want to lose my job, what should I do? You have to try harder. O.K. It's theatre, that's all. Nothing is established. This is the interplay of cause and effect.

Samsara means making illusion strongly real

Your words evoke or constellate certain feelings in the other person. But you didn't cause it to happen all by yourself. This is interdependence. Causal factors arising in that person's lifestream, causal factors arising in your life stream, causal factors arising in the budget of the institution, or what your boss is telling you, all of these factors move together and these words come out of your mouth. If we don't have this approach, then we're likely to be trapped and take the drama of our existence as the truth. That causes a lot of problems, because then we're at the mercy of the eight worldly dharmas of gain and loss, fame and notoriety and our hopes and fears take us bouncing up and down. So, renouncing samsara is not so much renouncing the world out there, because samsara is not out there, samsara is our mind. Samsara means making this strongly real. But it's illusion.

The theatre of conformity

Illusion means, it appears, but without self-substance. If you see for example the reflection of the moon on water, if the pond is still you can see the details of the bright, full moon. In the same way, when you have children you have to speak to them or push them a little bit to do their homework or clean their teeth. This is just theatre. In the world there are plenty of people without teeth. They can eat soup for the rest of their life. But you want them to have nice teeth, so they have to clean them. So, this is the theatre of your desire. You want the best for them. So, what you're actually trying to do is bring them into a particular theatre. The theatre of conformity.

Most of us don't want to be in that theatre very much. We want to be in the theatre of our unique individuality. But we also have to perform. So, if we go into resisting to bending our knee to something which is already constituted. What we're actually developing is an ego that's agitation. I don't have to, you can't make me. Children spend quite a lot of time caught up in this. If I conform, I will lose myself. Of course, that's not necessarily true, because you can conform in the manner of a dream. You only lose yourself if you feel the gorgeous plasticity of being, the flexibility of yourself should be determined by our own, rigid self-definition. You can't make me. That's very lonely. Now it's all up to me and I'm just going to do more of the same. But when you make me do things I don't want to do, what you're actually doing is introducing me to more of my potential, aspects of my potential which wouldn't have awakened if I was just doing what I want to do.

The wonderful paradox of that is, that other people's limitation is my extension

Disruption is freedom. Stasis is a prison. This is why in the Mahayana we have wisdom and compassion linked together, like the two wings of a bird. With wisdom we can become calm and clear. With compassion we have to open ourselves to a gnawing being. People who want things and don't do them in the way we thought, and so on. Helping other people is very frustrating, because they're not us. If they were me, they would do it my way. But they're doing it their way. So, if I'm going to help them do it, I'm going to help them their way. And the wonderful paradox of that is, their limitation is my extension. I'm taken out of myself to find a way to meet the other person as they are. So, if we understand this, the idea of a meditation retreat has to be re-conceptualised. Observing the tendency to repetition compulsion, we need to both develop the stability of samadhi, but always in the service of the potential of the unfolding of compassion. So, when it says in the text 'go live in a cave and wear the clouds as a hat' and so on, we can also see that this is the instruction to allow life to be as it is. If you're living in a cave and you don't have much food, then you're cold and hungry. If you have a job and your boss sends you emails at the weekend, that's another kind of disturbance. Both kinds of disturbance can be useful for practise. Rather than saying, 'why do they do this? I don't like it when they do that', which is the voice of our desire to have life on our terms. We can say: this is the situation, how will I respond? What is to be done.

Stopping the bad and being the good is not the meaning of renouncing samsara

Usually what we do is in terms of accepting and rejecting, we should not do bad things and try to do good things. And this discernment you find in all the stages of the dharma. And it's linked to the three root poisons. The three root poisons are the main thing that we need the medicine of dharma for. So, we have mental dullness or obscuration and arising from that we have desire, longing and attachment or aversion, anger, hatred. I want more of that, I want less of that. I like you because you make me happy, I hate you because you make me unhappy. This we can understand. So, look at the objects in the world, what are the ones I want closer to me, what are the ones I want further from me.

We look at ourselves and we look at the personality traits which I like and which I need to develop more and these are the traits which I don't like and I need to reduce. Stopping the bad and being the good is important, but it's not the meaning of renouncing samsara.

The real problem is the ignorance as it manifests as mental dullness, or stupidity

The main problem is the invisible problem. That's why practising the dharma is like reading a good detective novel. The person who does the murder is not the immediate suspect. The real problem is the ignorance as it manifests as mental dullness, or stupidity. And I'll say a little bit more about this. In Tibetan it's called *timug*. It gives a sense of kind of sinking in fogginess. It's kind of opacity, you don't see clearly with it and yet it is as if we see clearly, because it is the basis from which we seem to be seeing. You seem to be establishing something meaningful. So, I might say: when I was young I loved eating chillies, but now I don't eat them so much. So, it's as if I was telling you something about me. And I think, yeah, that's true, I used to eat a lot chillies when I lived in India. But it's a sequence of words, which create a little slice of the incredible richness of our lived existence. In the moment that we say these words. In the moment that we say these words, they come forward into the foreground of our lives and the other aspects seem to recede into the background.

The nature of anger is that it has a strongly selective attention and it builds up this picture

So, when we say something strongly, there's an inevitable decontextualisation. So, if you're in a relationship with someone, you might find yourself saying: you always leave the bathroom in a mess, just fucking do it! Now, it's highly unlikely that they ALWAYS leave the bathroom in a mess. So, the nature of anger is that it has a strongly selective attention and it builds up this picture. But in the moment that you're angry with a person, it's as if their sole reality is to be the one who leaves the bathroom in a mess. The force of the anger is arising from the conclusion that you've come to that I always have to tidy up the bathroom, it's not fair, you should tidy up your own mess, we can't go on living like this, this intolerable. And you build up this big lasagna :-)

We move from a description of moments of behaviour into an essentialised truth about the other person

And this is a mental formation in which many, many other factors about the other person are being ignored. We're actually constructing an image of the other and it's moving from a description of moments of behaviour into an essentialised truth about the other person. Can you tell us something about your boyfriend? Yes, he's an asshole who never cleans the bathroom. This now becomes the total definition and this is very dangerous. This is what we see in the middle east now. That people have developed deep investments of life energy into assumptions about other people. And these assumptions then lead us to a definite conclusion: you are my enemy. And you are dangerous and therefore the world is better if you're dead. I am a good person for removing your kind of person from the world. And every side is doing that. America has a policy of assassinating terrorists. Some terrorists don't think of themselves as terrorists, they think of themselves as freedom fighters, fighting against the great satan. The great satan is America. Ayatollah Khomeini said this many times. The devil is America. And the Americans, no! As for me, you are the devil! So, there you have ignorance, assumption plus power.

This root poison is so difficult to work with, because we rely on it for the development of samsara

And when you inhabit this, the key thing is that it's invisible to you as a belief, because it feels like the truth. So this is why this root poison is so difficult for us to work with, because we rely on it for the development of samsara. Oh, we should go to this cafe, they make a really good coffee. I know things about Berlin. This is how we build our world. We have definite knowledge. Between yesterday when you had the coffee, the machine could have broken, they could have bought a cheaper kind of coffee, the person making the coffee might not know the machine very well, anything could happen.

This world is based on assumptions and that's why it works well

But we rely on definite information like a kind of stepping stone for crossing a river and we know about the effect of power of assumptions. So, if you're doing some simple activity, like skipping with a rope and you try to think what am I doing? You fall over the rope, because an unexamined assumption is very effective. There's a particular flow to it. It's like this, it's like that. I know this, do I know that? What am I saying? So, this is amazing! This world is based on assumptions and that's why it works well. In Britain we like to feel that we have a special relation with America. This is a lie. This is completely deceitful. America is a deep structural enemy of Britain. In the Second World War, Roosevelt was absolutely determined to destroy the British Empire. If you look at the economic position before the world war and after... a lot of collapse. And if you look at America's

ambitions before the world war and after, you find America's new expansive colonial position. Because nature abhors a vacuum. If you take the bindweed out of your garden, nettles will come.

We need to examine – our own mind, our own unique, personal assumptions and how we call stupidity intelligence

So, after the British had lost their empire, the Americans were very active to develop(?) You can read really detailed, historical accounts about these things. But America is our special friend. This is how we become stupid. This is the basis of many of the economic problems of the European Union. We have the particular capacity for believing lies. Cemeteries are for other people. Hospitals are for other people. We're going to live for a long time. This is how we live. If we thought we were really going to die, we might review how we live. When I retire I'll have more time for practise and then you die and your practise wasn't done, because we were sure we would have a long life. And this is what we need to examine – our own mind, our own unique, personal assumptions and how we call stupidity intelligence. So going right back to the basic buddhist teachings, Buddha says all phenomena are impermanent But when we look at our own lives, we act as if we think that some things are permanent.

The potential of a frying pan is limited by calling it a frying pan

All compounded things have an inherent absence of self-nature or self-essence. Would you like a fried egg? Frying pan, gas, butter, egg - four factors. Open the egg and into the heated butter, now we have a fried egg. These are concepts. Fried egg is a concept. We know what we are talking about with a fried egg, it's very simple, it's very straightforward. It is the potential of the situation, plus a concept. As we were looking at last night, we project our concept onto the object and imagine that it's inherent in the object. So, we are creating the theatre of the frying egg. This is a frying pan. If you don't have anything else and you need to put a nail in the wall, you can hit it with a frying pan. If you don't have anything else, you can use the frying pan in the garden to dig a hole. There are endless things you can do with a frying pan. The potential of a frying pan is limited by calling it a frying pan. But the assumption that this is a frying pan, directs our embodied movement into the activity of frying the egg.

The first root poison of ignorance is forgetting the mind that projects into the object

What the first root poison of ignorance is indicating is, that you forget the mind when you project into the object. It is dull stupidity because it is self-abandonment. Oh, you should try this honey, it is really healthy. Oh, thank you, but I have diabetes, I won't have the honey. The first person thinks, honey is healthy. The second person, whose body is having a problem managing sugars, is not. But it is so normal, we are so habituated to think the honey is good. We don't even think 'I like the honey, perhaps you would like it'. That formulation at least keeps it in a relationship with me, but when we project our mind into the honey, we come to the conclusion, the goodness is in the honey. Someone else says: I don't like sweet things, I like savoury things. Oh, but it's good!

The qualities I see and take to be in the object are not really in the object

It's so normal to have that appreciation that the quality is there (in the thing). The over defined object is an illusory construct. That means we don't see what is there and that's a real problem. But the more important problem is, we abandon ourselves. So, this is really good honey, but you don't like it. The quick solution to that problem is, you're stupid! Something's wrong with you, because this is good. But if we think: I like it, you don't like it, what is the status of the honey? The honey is

a site which offers hospitality to liking and not-liking. And if we look around the world, we can think, perhaps everything is like that. Music, art, clothes – liking, not-liking, liking, not-liking. There's not one thing in the world that everybody likes. So, in that way we renounce the world, by seeing, it's in the manner of a dream. The qualities I see and take to be in the object are not really in the object.

It's very difficult to see your own assumptions, if you don't practise meditation

They are the unexamined force of my own assumption. But you have different assumptions from me. So, my assumptions can't be right, except being right for me. So what is this assumption? It's very difficult to see your own assumptions, if you don't practise meditation. People try to do this in the practise of psychotherapy, but it's more difficult because if you're telling someone about a core belief or a story you're caught up in, you're giving a story about something. So, you're wrapping one concept in other concepts in order to communicate it. So, if we're sitting in meditation and the thought arises 'I like honey, we have a chance to see, a thought is a thought. What is a thought? Something which seems to be real and true. Something that seems to tell me the truth, something which I allow to speak through me – this honey is good- I do that on the basis of my conceptualisation. That is a thought. The thought is now gone. An ephemeral, transient, ungraspable moment appears to be speaking an internal truth: this honey is good, I want honey. And then the thought is gone. And yet we can find ourselves getting up, going to the kitchen and get some honey. We're not going there because the honey in the kitchen is good, but because we have given ourselves to a thought. If I eat some of the good honey, I will be happy.

With unexamined assumptions, ignorance comes into the world

So, the thought links to energy, leads to mobilisation of our embodied being. But what was the thought? Ungraspable, just like a rainbow in the sky. It's there, but it has no substance of its own. But if you're out with a small child, it becomes very excited. It appears to them in a way they have learned to formulate experience. They say: look it's a rainbow! They don't say: look there's a strange phenomena, to which I've learned to apply the name 'rainbow'. It is a rainbow. The honey is good. This is how ignorance comes into the world, with unexamined assumptions, which seem to reassure us, that life is as we think it is.

My personal associations is the pattern of assumptions I decide to accept and reject

And when we become skilled in this activity of reliance on thoughts as the guarantor of truth, life just tumbles along. I remember when I came back from India. I was up in Scotland, talking to my mom. And in India I spent a lot of time thinking about death and being in cemeteries and so on. I said to my mom: you're getting old, maybe we should talk about death :) She was not very happy. No, why would I do that? Why would I think about death? There's nothing to think about. The assumption I had developed and the assumptions she had developed were completely different I thought it was helpful, she not. Then you start to think, my individual life, my personal associations is the pattern of the assumptions I decide to accept and the patterns I decide to reject.

The problem is that my thought, my sense of self and the openness of the mind all got clogged together

And these assumptions is what arises in the mind. From the buddhist point of view, they are not the mind itself. But when I say: I like honey, I seem to be speaking the truth of my experience and in

fact, I'm speaking the truth of me – I like honey. This feels like me, I'm my mind, of course, I like honey. My thought arising in the mind, my sense of self and the openness of the mind – they've all got clogged together. So, this is the problem that we need the medicine of dharma for. To start to tease out that these are thoughts and feelings and sensations arising and passing. Then we start to see, these are the thoughts that I like and these are the thoughts that I don't like to have in my mind. So, my ego-self is like a gardener, working out what is a flower, what is a weed. But what I call a weed, you call a flower, so often relating to other people is quite difficult. That their notion of horticulture is completely different from ours. But where we are the same is that we're both gardening.

The background illuminating clarity and the obscuring function

And then there's our awareness. I like honey and I'm aware of saying 'I like honey' and then I'm aware that my hands are somehow stuck in front of me :), now I'm aware that Kati stopped talking, so I have to talk. So, there's a background illumination to what is moving.

But the background illumination is invisible to us most of the time, because we are caught up and enacting of the truth of our detraction. So, we have awareness of *rigpa*, which is this background illuminating clarity, which reveals the ceaseless flow of experience, which is without substance. And then we have the reifying, solidifying reliance on assumptions which is hiding the open radiance of the mind from us. This obscuring function, in Tibetan it's called *marigpa*, not-*rigpa*, they're not two separate things, because *marigpa* is niched(?) in *rigpa*, because ignorance is ignoring the actual nature of the thought constructs, out of which it generates this sense of the world. So, we'll shortly go and take a break for lunch and this gives us many, many opportunities to explore our assumptions. How we respond to the food- liking and not liking and so on. If we don't like it and we see someone else looks quite happy with it – this is not the food, this is my mind. I am telling myself a story about the food. Someone else is telling a different story. And then we can see, it appears to be out there.

Observe how we are caught up in the impactful formations of these moments of energy

This is the projective nature of the mind. In the Dzogchen tradition they say that mind is like the sun and the clarity is like the rays that shine out from the sun. And the heat as they come to the earth, this is like the impact that things come into existence moment by moment. So we want to try to observe how we are caught up in the impactful formations of these moments of energy.

Like a cinema

Just like when you got to a cinema, where they have an old-fashioned projector. You sit in your seat and they open the curtain and there's a white surface and then the lights go down and the movie begins and the movie is projected onto the white screen and after two seconds you're in the movie. You forget you're in the cinema. You forget the projector. It was easier in the old days when I was child, because everybody smoked cigarettes and you could see the smoke going through the light from the projector. It's there, I see it, it's a movie! But where's the projector? The natural clarity of the mind, the illuminating projecting function, which is revealed in the moment that it shows itself. The movie is here and there.

If the projector breaks, the movie stops

Without the projector though, we wouldn't have a movie. It is undeniable, that you're watching a

movie. But that movie is not self-existing. If the projector breaks, the movie stops. So, this is what happens. We go out to have some lunch and the projector is running. What movie? 'Hopes and Fears' - it's very popular! Like and Not-Like. Good and Bad. You get to cry a little bit, you get to laugh a little bit. The movie is going on and we are seduced. This is it, this is life, here I am. That's part of the story. But there's also the space or the ground source of awareness and these two are inseparable.

Maintain a gentle attention to the pull to solidify transient experience

So, the path of Dzogchen is the non-duality of the ground source and the field of experience and the precise moments of experience. These three aspects arise together. We try to maintain a gentle attention to the pull you experience to solidify transient experience.

Caught up in our limiting tendencies

Just before the break we were looking at the inseparability of the open dimension of the mind, its clarity and the moment by moment display. The last preliminary before the main focus here is on Dorje Sempa. Dorje Sempa or Vajrasattva means indestructible being or the indestructible mind. This is our mind and yet we seem to be caught up in habit formations, impulses, tendencies and so on, that lead us astray. So, what is to be purified is our limiting tendencies. What are they to be purified on is the natural ground of the mind. So, we need to have a kind of ownership. We have to have the confession 'I get lost'. So, when we do the sitting meditation the mind sometimes drifts off. We get lost. Where do we go? Actually we're here. It is as if we have gone somewhere else, but we're still here. So, getting lost and being here, are they same or different?

We function through the obscurations and yet, we're not the obscuration

If you have a cloth that is dirty, then we say the cloth is dirty. Then we wash the cloth, then we say the cloth is clean. If the cloth were really dirty, how could it get clean? The cloth is clean, plus dirt. Because if the cloth being dirty, somehow means it is intrinsically or innately dirty, how would we clean it? The dirt is adventitious, it is contingent. It has arrived after the fact of the cloth. And yet functionally, while the cloth is dirty, it's dirty. If someone's drying the dishes with a dirty cloth, you say: eh, what's the point of that, the cloth is dirty. Then you can say: don't worry, it's not intrinsic :-)) Then you know, it's a man :-)) So, functionally, it's a dirty cloth. Functionally, we are caught up in the obscurations. We function through the obscurations, in the manner of the obscurations and yet, we're not the obscuration.

The dirt in the mind is not a permanent defilement

Now, when we do this simple sitting practise with the focus on the breath, then that can start ok, but then we are caught in a thought. Then it's as if the mind has been dirtied or mixed up with the thought. Functionally, we have gone under the power of the thought. We're fused with the thought. In that moment it is as if we are the thought. And then we come out of the thought, we're back on the breath. And then we get lost again. So, through this simple practise you have the experience the cloth is clean, the cloth is dirty, the cloth is clean, the cloth is dirty. The dirt in the mind is not a permanent defilement. It's a problem of misplaced generosity.

Dorje Sempa practise increases the clarity that the space that we have is inhabited by the thought, but not contaminated by it

The openness of the mind offers hospitality to the thought, but the thought becomes a squatter :) It says it's my house and fills the space. Then the thought vanishes and the space is open again. When the squatter is in the space of the building, he is the functional resident, but he has no structural authorization to be there. But when they are there, they are there. Because like a run down squat, there is no front door. The thought arrives and there's no knocking on the door. There's no bell to press, let them in or not. The purpose of the Dorje Sempa practise is to increase the clarity that the space that we have, that is inhabited by the thought is not contaminated by the thought.

The mirror - a very traditional example

So if we have a mirror and we look in the mirror, we are in the mirror. We seem to be in the mirror, because the mirror offers us a hospitable space. Then we turn the mirror and we see the reflection on the wall. Our reflection is no longer in the mirror, but it was. And when it was in the mirror, it filled the mirror. And we look at our reflection in the mirror and we know, that's me. You're cleaning your teeth.... you're in the mirror, but you're not in the mirror. This is a very traditional example. When the thought arises in the mind and it could be a very intense thought, an angry thought, a desireful thought, it may seem to fill the space of the mind and then it's gone. When we have intense emotions, it's difficult to think about them, because it seems as if the whole of us has been given over to what is arising. You don't stand in relation to what's arising in the mind, you are what's arising in the mind. And then you're not.

The purification of seeing, that the reflection is in the mirror, without contaminating the mirror

This is when we say Dorje Sempa purifies us, it's not even that purification is taking the dirt out of the cloth, it's the purification of seeing, that the reflection is in the mirror, without contaminating the mirror. So, if someone was to take a little kitten and hold it in front of the mirror and stab it in the eye, well, we wouldn't like this. We see the reflection. Nothing has happened in the reflection. The reflection seems to be horrible, but a reflection is a reflection. The horror is in our mind. It's not intrinsically horrible. It's interpretively horrible. Whether the quality in the reflection is given an attribution that it's beautiful or ugly, ethical or unethical, there is no intrinsic self-substance to a reflection.

Illusion has no substance, but it is impactful- the teaching of the Middle Way

That doesn't mean that functionally we are not impacted by different kinds of reflections. If you watch a horror movie you laugh, if you watch a horror movie you feel a bit fearful. The movie has no substance, but it is impact. And this is the important thing to see, that the buddhist notion of illusion means that the arising of a pattern meeting another pattern will generate a third pattern. So maybe you're looking at a movie with a nice story line and suddenly there's some horrible killing scene. A new mood arises in us. Ugh, why do they do that! So the first part of the movie had a certain story line, then there's this sudden scene and your mood has shifted. Illusion has no substance, but it is impactful. This is the buddhist teaching of the Middle Way. You can't say that it is nothing at all, because it has an impact. You can't say it's truly real having an impact, because actually there's no self-substance there. This is why we have the union of wisdom and compassion.

When doing purification with Dorje Sempa, we are purifying the belief that there are things to be purified

Wisdom means seeing the empty nature of everything. The mind is like a mirror. What arises in the mirror is a reflection. The reflection is there and not there. It's there as appearance, but because it has no substance to it, it's not really there. In the summer we see a mirage on the hot road. It's there, undeniably there, we can see it. But you never arrive at the mirage. In the same way a thought arises in your mind, it has an impact, but you can't catch it. It slips away and you're caught up in a thought about a thought about a thought. By running a flow of thoughts very quickly, it is as if you're catching up with your thought. So when we are doing purification with Dorje Sempa, we are not purifying anything except the belief that there are things to be purified.

For the sake of beings, we should act in a manner of helping and not harming

Now this is a bit difficult, because you could draw the conclusion, well, if it's all an illusion, it doesn't matter if I'm kind or selfish. But being kind or selfish has a different impact. An impact within the unfolding of illusion. If you just say, well, it doesn't matter because it's empty, you're going into a biased or partial or extreme view. It matters in terms of manifestation. And to sentient beings wandering in samsara, who have not awakened to the inseparability of appearance and emptiness, the difference between kindness and a harmful action is very great. Therefore for the sake of beings, we should act in a manner of helping and not harming, but without straying from the wisdom that there is no real difference between helping and harming. This is why it says in the tradition the dharmakaya is for yourself. The dharmakaya is the inseparability of your mind and the mind of the Buddha. That your mind is unborn awareness. But the form kayas or form appearances, samboghakaya and nirmanakaya, they're for the other. How we manifest is for the other people. And they are forms of compassion. So we manifest in ways which are beneficial for others.

The direct resting in emptiness is inseparable from the arising of compassionate

And the inseparability of these three kayas or modes of life means that the direct resting in emptiness is inseparable from the arising of compassionate action for the other. And this is not something that is created out of good intentions, this is how it is and has been from the very beginning, but obscured by the reifying assumptions. So, the paradoxical situation we find ourselves in is, that it is vital to do the purification, although in fact, there is nothing to purify. What we are purifying is lastly our own tendency to get lost. And this is subtle. Like when we're sitting in the practise, focusing on the breath, here I am, this is quite easy and then I'm lost. How did that happen? I didn't do it. Who did it to me? Here I am again and now I'm lost. This is what we have to purify. When you got lost, you didn't go anywhere else. We're lost where are we ? F**k! :) This is not easy.

The lostness is inside the foundness

Thoughts arise naturally in the mind. They arise and pass like on a summer's day when you get these little wispy clouds. But when we get lost, we're lost. The lostness is inside the foundness. In the traditional example there are two sisters and they're lying in bed together, one is awake, the other is asleep. The one who is asleep is having a nightmare and the awake one can see her body twitching. When she wakes up her sister, that sister awakens to the fact that she has always been safe in bed. She was in a nightmare safe in bed, she hadn't gone from being in a nightmare to being safe in bed. The nightmare was niched inside the being safe in bed, like the Russian doll. The unborn openness, the spaciousness of the mind contains everything. But it appears merged with the thought. The thought is not transformed. The thought appears to have it's same quality of arising and passing, being without any solidity or self-substance, but ignorance arises as a kind of belief, a

kind of giving ourselves to it.

Art - an invitation to give yourself to a performance

And we are very lucky nowadays, because we have a lot exposure to the arts. Art, whether it's dance, theatre or opera is an invitation to give yourself to a performance. We suspend our disbelief and give ourselves to the truth, the meaning, the story which is unfolding. We love this. If we're reading a novel, we want it to be a good novel, that grabs you. Reading a novel is like falling in love. You want to give yourself to the book and you want the book to give itself to you. You have to go to work in the morning, but you can't wait to exchange this moment of pleasure. :D These external experiences allow us to see what happens in the meditation. It's a double move. In a sense it's completely stupid to believe in this book, it's a novel, somebody made it up, why would you believe in it? But it's delicious. This is one of the reasons why Plato was against the arts. Because they seduce good citizens away from thought about how the polis, how the country should be organised. If you're willing to believe in things which are not true and find that inspiring, then this is not good.

The pleasure of self-abandonment is what happens in meditation

But we like art. We go to a gallery and we look at a painting and we give ourselves to it. We enter into some kind of harmonic with the vision of the artist. We can relax our gaze and have a little more distance and then we can see the brushstroke, the way the paint's been applied. We can have a technical gaze. And this allows us to think about the painting and then we give ourselves to the painting and it gives itself to us and it's in that mode that we are touched and moved. We have a naïve aesthetic appreciation. An appreciation through the heart, rather than through the head. And this is transformative. This is something we're all very familiar with: the pleasure of self-abandonment. This is what happens in the meditation. You abandon yourself into the thought. The thought catches you and you can keep investing in it.

When you stay with looking at the bird or a rose or a painting, the mind empties

In my life I've seen quite a lot of paintings and there are some paintings that I'm willing to travel quite far for, to look at again. In the national gallery in London there are two paintings by Souberain. They're not exciting paintings. They're paintings of two different monks in prayer, muted browns and greys, but I love them. And there's something about what is that? it's like meeting a very good friend. You have an unimpeded contact, you don't have to protect yourself against it. Because our critical intelligence is in many ways restrictive and self-protected. Now, from the point of view of meditation, what we tend to ignore in these moments is the nature of the mind. I give myself to the painting and it seems so rich and deep and I can look at it for half an hour, my body is not moving, I'm just transfixed. The mind is empty, that's why you can see the painting. The hospitality that allows the painting to fill you, is the emptiness of your mind. Unborn awareness is looking at the painting. Not your habitual ego formation.

The temptation is to be present as the commentary about the awareness

But if you run in parallel a narrative that's about looking at the painting, there you see drop by drop the blinding juice that makes everything opaque. Oh, it's a really amazing painting, how did you do

that? I love that. You get the painting, but you abandon yourself. Then you look at your watch, oh s**t, time to go, and you're off in your busy mind. This is a flip flop, only the object, only the subject. But when you stay with looking at the bird in the garden, or the roses or a painting or a sculpture, the mind empties, because the mind is always empty. In order to offer space to the painting, you have to be undistracted, one-pointed attention. The key thing then is, be aware of yourself. Be present as the awareness, because the temptation is to be present as the commentary about the awareness, which hides the awareness.

All the meditation practices are focused on restoring the felt sense of the mind to its natural place

The purity of the mind is available all the time. And there are many different kinds of experiences which can bring it forward. For example sneezing. If you have a big sneeze, you're shocked out of yourself. If you don't comment on it, but stay with it, that is the naked mind itself. All the meditation practices are focused on restoring the felt sense of the mind to its natural place. A place it has never moved from.

Because of great merit we can meet a fully accomplished guru

So now we look at the text. And it begins with Guru Yoga and the Four Initiations. The Guru is of course a very central topic in Tibetan Buddhism. So, it's very important to understand what is the true function of the Guru. So, he begins by setting it out, having gathered the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. During measureless eons we have gathered the precious human existence with the freedoms and opportunities, this is great merit and because of this we can meet with a fully accomplished Guru in order to practise meditation.

Guru Yoga without reservation

And then it says "with great faith and devotion to that Guru we faithfully practise the liberating elixir of his teachings and we'll be able to truly benefit ourselves and all other beings". So, having faith is being set out as very important. Faith means to be without reservation. To be without reservation is to be without commentary. If we say 'yes' to something and that's a full, deep, easy 'yes', then we have unimpeded connection. So, in tantric depictions you often see these tantric deities in sexual congress, in *yab yum*. They're saying yes to each other. There's not a resistance. From both sides there's an interest and eagerness to do this. This simplifies the mind. Given the freedom of our modern life, most of us will have had the experience of being in bed with someone and wondering why you're there. It's quite difficult to get all the chakras aligned. :) So, there's a t-shirt I saw a woman in North England wearing, that said 'keep drinking 'til he's cute'. So, that's a way of knocking out the thinking function, which allows some arousal of sexual desire, but as the alcohol wears off, there could be some thoughts of what am I doing here?

The function of faith

So, we know as human beings it is quite difficult to gather of ourselves together to be fully in one place at one time. This is the function of faith, not to be dispersed, not to be in an inner dialogue, wondering, perhaps, maybe, should I, shouldn't I, but just to be open-hearted. The function of the practise is about us. As he says, 'for the benefit of myself and all other beings'. The Guru yoga is

not a cultish invitation to get lost in idealisation of someone, but to have the experience of this being enough. To be without reservation, because lack and excess, like a little two-stroke engine is running the moped of our existence. But when something is enough, we're settled. The movement of this is this and that is that becomes unnecessary, this is ok, I'm sorted.

A truly accomplished guru transmits sky to sky

Then he's saying: "although one may have great faith in and longing for the dharma, if one does not meet with an accomplished Guru, then the dharma one practices will be difficult to develop as the true dharma, then although one has practised this dharma, only worldly benefits will develop. There are many Gurus whose faithful disciples fall down and get lost, so it's very important to seek out a truly accomplished Guru." Now in the tradition, he talks about the deepest style of meditation as being 'sky to sky'. That in front of us is the clear, blue sky and in our heart is the infinite sky of awareness. And these skies are not separate, they're in non-duality. And in this space many deities can come and go. Space is infinite. It has no block to it. In the Tibetan language there are many, many words that mean not blocked, unhindered, unimpeded and so on.

When people fall in love there's often a feeling of mutual opening and then after a while you realise, oh, this is a person with their own agenda. It may not be a harmful or a negative agenda, but they have a particular shaping and that shape will influence how we can be with them.

A fully accomplished teacher is one who is not looking for anything

The function of the Guru is to manifest the qualities of the three kayas. As we said before, the dharmakaya is for ourselves, it's enough. And so our energy is for the other. And so, the energy of the other person shouldn't be blocked by any particular, self-referential wishes we have. When we do the practise, we say 'in this and all my future lives I will work for the benefit of others'. This means that our love or our compassion should be a gift without a demand. It's not a boomerang that's going to come back to us. These are the qualities we all try to develop and the teacher should be manifesting for-the-otherness. Because the dharma is an end in itself (the Kantian thing – an end in itself). That is to say Dzogpachenpo is complete. It is what it is. But when we use something as a means to an end, in an instrumental way, the very mode of utilising the other person for our purposes is a subtle violence. It's filling the space of potential with 'what-about-me-ness?'. 'What about me?' is a question to be answered, an important question, but it's a question of awakening to the dharmakaya. By awakening to our own mind. If the 'what about me?' is answered by you, then I'm asking 'what are you going to do for me?'. So, I'll be nice to you, if you're nice to me. And then you're into exchange and trade and everything is a little bit precise, a little bit limited. So, a fully accomplished teacher is one who is not looking for anything.

If you find the teacher who is not looking for anything, you get everything

And it's saying, that if you don't find this, you are looking for something, then you will find a teacher who is also looking for something. But if you find the teacher who is not looking for anything, you can trade your looking for something, for looking for nothing. And then if you get nothing, you get everything.

In his early biography Chogyam Trungpa writes about this. He was very close to his main teacher, but when he was, I think 15, he went into a three year retreat. And as he's coming to the end of the retreat, he's very excited, he'll see his teacher again. He has so many questions that he wants to ask him and so many experiences he's had, that he wants to tell his teacher. Then when he comes out of

the retreat, the first thing he finds is that his teacher is dead.

Because he was very brilliant, he was able to recognise, oh, this was all my whole mental construction. If my teacher had been alive and he talked with him and he smiled at him, he would have made all this nothing into something. And by dying and giving me no confirmation, he's shown me the emptiness of my own mind. And I think this is a very beautiful example that we spend so much of our life asking other people to confirm that we're ok or attractive or interesting or this or that, rather than it being the presence of nothing.

This is the particular alchemy of dharma. Traditionally alchemy turns ordinary material into gold. But this alchemy turns something into nothing. That letting go is the road to getting everything. And grasping will give you something, something which is worst than nothing. So, the traditional function of the Guru is to take all your somethings and give you nothing in return.:)

The qualifications of an accomplished teacher

So, what is an accomplished Guru? “At the beginning of his training he must have extensively and impartially heard and thought about the dharma In the middle period he should have gained deep awakening in his meditation and finally he should be working for the benefit of sentient beings. Having little desire for the world, he should always stay in mountain hermitages. He should have given up outer works like property, business and politics and inner works such as family affairs”. And as we looked at in the morning, there are two ways of doing that. You can do it in the outer way of actually moving to the mountains, or living in the world as if it was a dream. As if it was a cemetery, in which there is nothing to grasp. “Having developed a very pure bodhicitta or intention to help others, he must have enough experience and knowledge of the methods for practising the developing and perfecting systems”. The importance of this kind of background is, that the teacher will be able to understand the particularities of the student. The essential thing is, how do we apply this to us? It's important to ask questions. When we meet together here, there's always time to ask questions. Because it's about how the dharma fits you. We also need to fit into the dharma, but it needs some adjustment. Just as a tailor can let down the legs of trousers or raise them up, so the teacher should be able to accommodate the student in the dharma. So, he says it's necessary to seek someone like that as your guru.

A connection from a previous life with the guru

“If on merely hearing his name your hair bristles, if on merely seeing his face you gain blessing and if on merely praying to him, your mind turns away from samsara, then these are signs that indicate that you have a connection from a previous life with the guru.” The main thing is to develop whatever potential you have that is in the connection. So, although he's talking here of the qualities of the teacher, there's a parallel issue here of the qualities of the student.

Obstacles to this kind of relationship

So, what are the obstacles to developing this kind of relationship. If we have pride and we tend to look down on other people it's more difficult. If we're very critical and always looking for points that are wrong, then that's also likely to be unhelpful. Is there likely to be anyone walking on this earth about whom some negative comments couldn't be made? It's always possible to smear shit. There's always something not to like or say he did too little of this or too little of that.

If we are in love with critical intelligence, we are at the mercy of the opinion of others

If we are in love with our own critical intelligence, then we may think that it is a duty, in fact an ethical duty to be aware of the faults of others. Maybe.

If your job is quality control in a factory, then you need to see that the product is at standard marketable quality.

In my work at universities I had to mark many, many dissertations. And it's quite a subjective thing. You have to give some evaluation out of a hundred. There's some reasons why and some reasons against and often you have a fellow marker and you compare what is going on, she'll have her opinion and I'll have mine. Psychology and psychotherapy is not very objective. We have our judgement and the judgement reflects ourselves. So, these poor students are at the mercy of the moods of the examiner.

So this is the truth of the world. We're all at the mercy of the opinions of other people. And we feel it's important to have an opinion, to have something to say. I didn't like this movie, I thought the plot was ridiculous, etc.... That is a position that confirms I have a mind of my own and I am able to see the good and the bad points.

The good points is the second poison of desire and the bad points is illuminated by anger or aversion, which is the third poison. But if we remember from this morning when we were looking at these three poisons, the most dangerous is the first one – the assumptions. What we take to be a natural truth.

Seeing the guru in the form of the three kayas, you get that benefit

So, if the guru is a woman, she's a woman. If the guru is a man, he's a man. But the guru is not a man or a woman. For the purposes of the practise the guru is the presence of the three kayas. Seeing them in that form, you get the benefit. As it says in many different texts, if you see the guru as a Buddha, you get an Buddha's blessing, if you see them as an ordinary human being, you get an ordinary human beings blessing.

In the view of tantra and dzogchen we are creatures of space, not intrinsically human

But they're human and we're human. We're all human. This is not really the view of tantra and dzogchen. We are creatures of space. Not outer space, as in science-fiction, but we are the creatures of the dharmadhatu, the fundamental space of existence. When we walk down the street, we see human beings. Well, the dharma says, they are like an illusion. Even the heart sutra says clearly, there are no sentient beings. Everything is emptiness. Recognising emptiness, the mind manifests as three kayas. But these are just ideas that human beings have invented. That is one option. It is available every day on the great world buffet. I'm not stupid. I know what's what. You are human, I am human. These are just some ideas. This is available. Dharma view is, we are not human. Human is the patterning of our energy at this current moment. In previous lives we could have been a dog or a frog. Next life could be in a god realm. We are not intrinsically human. We are circumstantially, situationally human.

The basis is infinite in its potential, in its generosity, in its hospitality

And what is the basis for this potential to be dog or frog or human? It is the unborn emptiness of the mind. How come the side mirror in your car can show a million images when you drive a hundred kilometres? Moment by moment by moment new images are arising as the car proceeds. This is possible because the mirror is empty of itself. If you were to stick a photograph over the mirror, it wouldn't change over a hundred kilometres. Because the photo is full of photoness. It's completed in its limitation. But the mirror is infinite in its potential, in its generosity, in its hospitality.

We have already had a thousand lives in this one body

Each of us was once inside our mother's belly. We were very small, we could not talk at first. We couldn't walk. And we're not like that now. When you look at a little baby, it's very different. We are not babies. We had been babies, but we're not anymore. When we were babies we did baby things and then we did little infant things. Then we did teenage things and then we start slowly, slowly, very slowly to do adult things. We have already had a thousand lives in this one body. So, when we think this is me, this is just another reflection in the mirror. If we stay alive it's going to be different. The mind is empty.

When we open to the possibilities of revelation, the more open we are, the more is revealed to us

The guru we take as the representative of the three kayas. The guru's mind is space. Our mind is space plus obscuration. By linking our mind with the guru's mind, the space is bigger and bigger and bigger. And the obscurations are stretched out and like clouds, thinning and dissolving. So, having a critical mind and judging is useful for some purposes. But this critical attitude and also the paranoid and doubtful is all operating inside the paradigm that thoughts tell the truth. From the buddhist point of view and understanding we put the high status of thoughts into question. That if we open and trust and have faith, we enter another paradigm. The paradigm of revelation. When we rely upon our thoughts we are building up images, thought constructions, conclusions about something. But when we open ourselves to the possibilities of revelation, the more open we are, the more is revealed to us.

Is it safe to be so undefended?

So, is it safe to be so undefended? Only if the other person has no agenda. If they're not trying to catch you as part of their construction. Which is why generally in the Nyingma tradition, we pray to the guru in the form of Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava is not going to ask you for any money or sex or anything. Much safer. So, we take a break now and then we come back and do some meditation.

***Shine* without an object**

So, now we do the practise of calming the mind *Shamata* or *Shine* without an object. So, before we're looking at the flow of the breath at the nostrils, which gives us something to focus on. Now we just relax and we focus on whatever occurs.

We sit in a relaxed way, with the skeleton carrying the body, the gaze is into the space in front of us, we're not staring at the distant wall. We're just relaxed and open and life continues. Sometimes we see peoples' bodies moving a bit, we hear noises from the outside, we feel sensations in the body and there's arising thoughts or feelings. Whatever comes, we're just open to that. It comes and goes and we're with it. Not trying to investigate it or hang on to it, but just as if we were the mirror with different moments arising and reflections passing through. We do this practise from time to time. You can do it on your own in the evening and see what experience arises for you. It's not something to push or to strive at, you want to allow the free flow of experience and to relax our habitual involvement and pattern building and meaning creation. And this allows us to settle inside. And of course, if we've been holding ourselves together for a long time, that process itself can be anxiety provoking, because we don't know what's going to happen. And yet, here we are. Many different

things, we didn't expect to happen, but we're just aware of them. So it's through this practise that you become more aware between involved consciousness and relaxed open awareness.

Our involved consciousness is a kind of protective gate keeper

Our involved consciousness is trying to make sense of what's going on. In a sense it keeps healthy by having some good problems to chew on, like a dog needs a bone to keep its teeth strong in the gums. So, we have a mobilising arousal on the basis 'it's all up to me'. I am the one who brings order to existence and if I don't do this, there'll be the other polarity, which is chaos. Then I won't know what's going on and I won't feel safe. This anxiety is a kind of protective gate keeper. It allows the ego to keep protecting its territory. But actually we're quite lucky people. We live in an environment and a time which is quite safe. It's not so difficult to make some money and find a place to live. So we're often mobilising ourselves around problems, which are not as important as we take them to be.

Anxiety- a very important aspect of our mental experience

So, there's a kind of tilting or fulcrum point here. Tipping to one side, it says everything will be ok. I'll find a way. Something okay will happen. And on the other side, there is an anxiety, - well, I don't want it to go wrong! I need to be in charge. So, the second position is more retractive, it's tensing in. And the former position is more extensive, moving out into the world as it unfolds. Anxiety is a very important aspect of our mental experience. People say, that you need a small amount of stress to be healthy. Too much stress and you get burned out, but too little stress and you can start to give up on everything, because you don't mobilise into the situation. Anxiety is an indication, something is wrong. But as with all mental formations, it can take on a life of its own. It can be the mental equivalent of tinnitus.

When people have tinnitus they hear sounds in their ear which can have a whole range of sounds, like shushing sound, a clicking sound, and so on. There are different ideas about the cause of this. But one quite clear explanation is that these tissues with the fine hairs that move through the vibrations that are coming into the ear get tired of moving to other people's tunes. And so, they get together and start vibrating by themselves :) And so we have this internally generated sound. And it's similar with anxiety. If you're a small baby you can have anxiety because your mom hasn't cleaned your nappy quickly enough and you're getting cold and a bit raw. And when you get to school you can get anxious because your best friend doesn't want to play with you anymore. You're anxious because there's some subject that you're not very good at. So, these are normal anxious reactions to situations. They have, if you like, a rational basis and we can learn to manage them better. We start to have more confidence, that we'll get through it, it'll be ok.

Dealing with over-anxiety

But the particular movement of anxiety which is the arising of adrenalin, which feeds the cortisone in the brain, so one becomes an automatic function. And then you can end up having panic attacks, where there's a fear I'm going to fall down or go unconscious. I can't manage, I can't cope. So, there's an arousal cycle which is taking on a life of its own. We act as if there was a danger and once you become aroused in terms of the danger which you have imagined, you start to feel the real biochemical shift of responding to a danger and it just escalates. It's very helpful then to explore situations where you don't know what's going to happen. But do it in a safe holding environment. For example doing contact improvisation, in which you open yourself into finding a way of moving together with other people. There's no choreography, you can't know in advance how other people

are going to be moving. So, it brings you again to this tilting point, will I go into my anxious place where I don't know what to do, so I can't do anything or we tilt out and we look at how the movement is occurring, not judging it, not fearfully reacting to it, not thinking 'oh, they can do that, but I couldn't'. But with an open perception we allow the movement to touch us. And then we can find ourselves moving, because we're not interrupting the circle of participation. Because, although anxiety is an arousal, it's also a circuit breaker. So, the circuit is our connectivity with the world. If we receive the optimal information of what is happening, then we find a way of coming into it.

We need to make friends with ourselves

All that's required is that we are what we are, which is part of the world. But when we go into ourselves, into our private world, then experiences can become over-intense, because it's all about me. So, one of the things we need to do is make friends with ourselves, be more tolerant of the various kinds of experiences we can have and simply recognising them without either indulging them or judging them harshly. So, if you have a tendency to be a bit shy, you just have to know, I'm a bit shy. My shyness is manifesting so, I'm stepping back. And the shyness is allowed to have it's own size. Not to increase and dominate all it's social interaction, not to be denied, but to be included. The focus of dzogchen is on wholeness. If it's whole, it means every part of us has a place. Sometimes people become very envious or jealous, angry or lazy, self-destructive.

Don't merge with a pattern or identify with it as the totality of your being

With every pattern that we have, the buddhist approach is the middle way. Don't merge into it or identify with it as the totality of your being. And don't try to get free of it, or destroy it, deny or reject it. Because when we have tendencies that we regard as negative, we're trying to expel parts of ourselves to get rid of it, without really having experience of what it is: I'm afraid, oh, now I have fear. What is fear? You notice: my skin tension is changing, my posture is changing, my breathing is changing. These are various movements that are occurring at the moment. And I'm still here. If I merge into it then I'm just anxious, or I'm afraid, or I'm jealous. And if we relax that identification and allow that anger or what it is to arise, there's space for the movement of the mind and we realise that big wave comes up and goes down and it doesn't define who we are and it doesn't remain.

Instead of having to get rid of a tendency, trust the buddha's teaching on impermanence

But if we develop a story about it: 'oh I'm very tense or angry, I've got a real problem with it, I need to deal with it. I don't like to be like that'. That would indicate that I need to stop being like that. So, if you focus on the object you need to stop having that object. But if you just stay as the subject then 'oh, what is this? It's something which arises and passes. So, instead of having to get rid of this tendency, you start to trust the buddha's teaching that everything is impermanent. That was a horrible moment and it's gone. 'Oh, from time to time I have horrible moments – and I'm still here! What makes it worse is when I condemn myself: oh, you idiot, you'll never learn. Because then what you're doing is, you're merging the energy of the mind, which is arising as pattern formation, with the openness of the mind. Today the clouds are filling the sky, yesterday there was more sunshine.

We remember the blue sky. Yesterday the sky was blue, maybe tomorrow the sky will be blue. The fact that it's grey today, doesn't mean it will always stay grey. So that's exactly what happens with ourselves. We get into a mood and by fixating on it, by merging with it, it's as if it were an x-ray of

our soul, which is a disclosure of who we really are. From the buddhist point of view, suffering arises from ignorance and attachment. Attachment is exactly that. It's not like I'm attached to my glasses because they're useful to me. That level of attachment is quite easy, because there's an object and a subject and they seem to be apart, but they get linked together.

Stories arise, because we are identifying with the thoughts

So we might make a mistake and if we're very sensitive we might feel embarrassed. We feel sure that everybody saw what I did, they all feel I'm an idiot. I don't want to go back to work tomorrow, because they'll all be looking at me. That kind of horror story arises, because we are identifying with the thoughts that are arising. My thoughts like to kick the shit out of me. So, where do thoughts come from? They come from the mind.

Thoughts are the children of the mind

It's not good in family systems where the children are the boss. The parents are the parents. They are in charge of what shoes you, what food you eat and when you go to bed. When the child is the king, this is psychopathology in the family. Of course there's a place for children and they're welcome in their place, but not as the king. This is a metaphor. For what? For the mind, (funnily enough). Thoughts are the children of the mind. there's a place for the children, but they are not the king or the queen. So when your thoughts are beating you up (we ask) 'what's going on here, thought where did you come from? The mind is chief. Different buddhist books express this in different ways. Mind is the king, the queen, the ruler, mind does everything.

When thoughts, feelings and sensations, memories catch us, we need family therapy

So, when thoughts, feelings and sensations, memories seem to catch us, burn us, grind us and make us feel small and stupid, something is wrong. We need family therapy. "Thoughts, it's your bedtime. Hush, no, not another word, into bed"! Ah, now it's very peaceful. It's like that. When thoughts have grasped control and are driving you into the wall, something is wrong. And this all we really mean by anxiety, panic attacks, depression and so on. That the content of the mind, which has sprung from the mind, appears to be dominating us and telling us what the mind is.

The function of the virtue of believing in others, is to allow yourself to not know.

So, I'll go through the rest of the section of the text on the guru quite briefly, just to summarise it, because it's self-evident, I think and it relates exactly to what we've been talking about.

The first point of serving the guru is to always believe, that what the guru does is good. This means that when we get into the judging position, finding the faults in others, particularly in the teacher, we need to think: 'am I omniscient, am I omnipotent? I don't like what the teacher does, therefore what the teacher does is wrong. Maybe, maybe not. Maybe you don't know why that's occurring. But according to my interpretive matrix, it is bad. I'm going to the dharma to get out of my limitations, but I'm going to use my limitations to evaluate the dharma – a bit of a problem. But maybe this person is not good. First of all, look! Speedy judgement is not helpful.

Of course, there are some people that get set up as teachers who are exploitative, so keep your eyes open. But if we can just think I don't know why this happens, this is a big world and I understand very little, that's quite a helpful position. In the bible it says: "it's easier for a camel to get through

the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven.” It’s not because of the money, it’s because rich people, especially in traditional cultures are very powerful. They do what they like, nobody contradicts them. And so they’re trapped. If you’re always the big man, this is very unnatural. How can you become small again? So, part of the function of the virtue of believing in others, is to allow yourself to not know.

Giving you all that constitutes me, I start to see, I’m not my constituents

The second point is to give whatever you have. So, it’s traditional. It’s the same as Jesus says. He says: “lay down your nets and come with me and I will make you a fisher of man.” Giving up everything for someone else is a noble sacrifice. But what does it really mean? It means what are the habits, the substances the ways of behaviour that confirm my habitual sense self? We give this to the teacher. You can have that. You can have my memories of my childhood. You can have my technical competence. Because I use these things to make a sealant around me. But I want to open. So, I’m going to let go that. Anyway when we die it’s all gone. So, we can give it away or we can wait for death to take it. It’s going to go away. But I need these qualities in order to be me. But part of the reason of why we suffer in samsara is because we insist on the fact that I am me. To give away one’s qualities, and when I say that here you, don’t have to do it substantially, I mean you don’t have to give your old shoes to the teacher. But if I’m giving you all that constitutes me, I start to see, I’m not my constituents.

The idea of giving everything to the guru is to say that in the meditation we let go

Due to causes and conditions I have this particular form in this world at this time. If we give our happiness, our confidence our skill, we’ll be naked and empty. The founding buddha, Kuntu Zangpo, is naked and empty. The other buddhas they have different hairdresses, necklaces and bracelets and so on, but Kuntu Zangpo is naked. No ornamentation. So this idea of giving everything to the guru is to say that in the meditation we let go. Let the thoughts come and go. We don’t say ‘I like this one and grab this thought, or go away horrible thought’.

To be able to do whatever he orders is also linked to believing whatever he says is true. It could be that in life we have made some bad decisions, because we thought we knew best. So, generally speaking, buddhist teachers are not going to ask you to do anything mad or bad. They might say you should do some prostrations. But then you have to know what kind of teacher this is. Do they work in dharma Mc Donalds, big mac and chips?

We don’t see the whole of ourselves

This is the ngöndro. This is what we’re cooking, so you better eat it. If it’s like that, you got to give it some thought, ‘is that what I need?’ The issue is to look along the line of sight of the teacher. It’s the same in therapy, if the patient can look at the track of the gaze of the therapist, they can learn something new. I might say to a patient ‘you have to tell your mother to fuck off’. They’ll say ‘I couldn’t tell her to fuck off’. Then I say ‘well, that’s the reason why you come here every week and pay me money’. Instead of saving up your money to see me, you could go on holiday, go to a nice restaurant, you could get a lovely new dress. The cheap and cheerful path to freedom is just to tell your mother to fuck off. So, when the patient gets the courage to say stop bossing me around, I’m over thirty years of age, they find that the mother is changed. This bossy, bullying mother is now shrunk, because this was a drama of role differentiation. But when we sit inside our fear ‘I couldn’t do that, I couldn’t do that’, we can only come to do it when we trust that someone is really on our side. So this is what it means. That we don’t see the whole of ourselves.

The healthy, beneficent approach of idealisation of the teacher

And then it goes into a description of the teacher and receiving the four initiations in the form of light through the forehead, the throat and the heart. This is a tantric method and, in general, if you want to practice this, you should get an initiation from a teacher. All the schools of Tibetan buddhism use the same method of the four initiations Here it highlights the importance of idealisation. I am very small, you are very big. Because you are very big, you can help me. Your bigness isn't shrinking me, your bigness is on my side and will help me. So this is the healthy, beneficent approach of idealisation of the teacher. That's the first part.

The light of the teacher and the student are merged

The second part is, that we then recite some mantra or say some prayer with the visualisation of the teacher and imagine rays of light coming out of their body into our body, so that our body is full of light and then their light body comes on top of our head and dissolves down into a ball of light and comes down into our heart and then our body, which is now nothing other than light, dissolves into that ball. So the light of the teacher and the student are now merged into one ball and we are that ball of light. So there's nothing more existing than one small ball of light. We're not in our usual body imagining this, we've gone right into the imagination. This is all there is: one ball of light. Which then gets smaller and smaller 'till it's a tiny point and the dissolves.

Then there's nothing, no samsara factory pumping shit in your head again

Now there is nothing. We sit relaxed in that infinite nothing and then gradually thoughts, feeling, sensations start to arise. If we've really gone into this unlimited, unbounded nothingness, then there's nothing else. It's not like in the next valley there's a samsara factory which is closed for Sunday and when you come out of the meditation, the factory starts to pump all this shit in your head again. Nothing and then something. The something of nothing. Like the heart sutra - form and emptiness. Emptiness is form. Feeling is emptiness, emptiness is feeling.

One strong enough to save us

So, gradually we become aware, everything is manifesting out of emptiness. Everything is the mandala of all the buddhas. So, the function of idealising the teacher is to allow enough longing and identification and hope to gather all of you into 'please save me'. Without that, how is it going to work? There'll be no one strong enough to save us. The teacher gives us the nothing which is liberation.

To find someone who gives you nothing, is rare and precious

There's lots that give us something. You can go out on the street and bum a cigarette, or bum a couple of euros to buy a can of beer. It's not so difficult to get something from someone. But to find someone who through your own meditation practice can become the basis of giving you nothing, that's rare and precious, because salvation, liberation, awakening is not a matter of theory. Not a matter of having better quality ideas in your head. It is an experience. We have to enter into the experience.

Emotions that ordinarily make you feel small and stupid are turned into fuel for devotion

So the experience involves emotion. And the emotions which in ordinary life might make you feel small and stupid are being gathered together and being turned into the fuel for devotion. I can't make it on my own. I need you, you have to help me. If you feel desperation that activates a total commitment and this opens the heart. Opening the heart means to drop our defences. If you've been lucky enough to be around newborn babies, you can see this amazing look that comes in their eyes – infinite trust, no defence. Oh, so this is how we want to be, like a small baby. And then the visualisation that allows us fully to imagine that this happening.

Using imagination of pure form to liberate solidity of reified imagination

As we were looking at last night. Everything in this world is our imagination. When you learn a language like German, you enter into a particular imaginal field in which the semiotic verb is tilted into a particular modality that brings together narrative about the world. This is the limiting power of imagination. We're imagining, but believe we are seeing the truth. We project our imagination onto the world, but take it as a true account of what is there. So, in this practice of guru yoga as done in tantric form or as dzogchen approach, we're using imagination of the pure form of the deity to liberate or deconstruct this solidity of reified imagination.

Using the path of poisons to transform attachment

So, faith is very important. Faith allows us to hold on to the rope of dharma in the midst of this stormy sea of our confusions, our karmic attributions and so on. So we transform grasping at the objects of the world, grasping at concepts, grasping at narrative into grasping onto the guru and the deities. I really need these new trainers. Three of the boys at school have got them. If you give me these trainers I'll tidy my bedroom every day. Cause if I got these trainers, people at school are going to think I am cool. Children feel that. This object will give me what I need. I need a bicycle. I've got to have a bicycle! Not that kind of bicycle, that's a horrible one, this kind. It's exactly this energy of grasping and fantasy idealisation, which if you turn on to the open empty form of the guru with the three kayas becomes the path of liberation. So, we're using the path of poisons to transform itself into elixir. In Tibetan there's a word *dutsi*, the full name is *dutsi cho men*, which means demons' essence dharma medicine. This is often distributed at initiations. So the dharma medicine is made out of the essence of the demon. This is a very radical kind of homeopathy. What is the essence of the demon? It's attachment. When you release attachment you release energy.

So much life energy is trapped inside us

The child that won't do their homework, really wants the bicycle. So, this lazy, little bugger that just eats a lot is now full of energy. So much life energy is trapped inside us. In the yoga system it's trapped in the nadi system, because the prana, the free flow of the breath is blocked, because we return to our obsessive patterns again and again, so our life energy, trapped in these small units, is vibrating like putting your fingers on a flute, you get the different notes when you trap the wind. It is the somethingness of our existence which is the block. By dissolving the somethingnesses that we have and that we are, this trapped energy is free to move and then we start to trust our spontaneity, our intuition, we can improvise. So we trust our participation in situations. We don't need to prepare in advance because we're here and it flows. So this is why faith is very important.

Observe yourself

Tommorrow we go into the dzogchen part of the text. In this part we get a clear idea of the nature of the mind and how to work with that in meditation. So when you go out into the world this evening, in a very gentle and tender way, observe yourself. Not judging, but, just observing. What are the choices that you make? What sort of situations do you avoid? What are you drawn towards? Because each of us has to find the topology of our lived existence. The ideas we have about ourselves and the actuality of how we manifest, may not be the same. So, the key thing is, without criticism, without harsh judgement, see: Oh, this is how I act , this is how I speak, with different people, I want to say something to that person because I like them, but I swallow my words.

The central focus of Dzochen is the absence of division

New day, new chance. We're going to focus on this short text of Jetsangpa. The central focus of Dzochen is the absence of division. Dzogchen means complete, whole, entire, which indicates that the original situation or the unchanging ground, in which we find ourselves, has never been split into subject and object.

Me - a kind of conceptual barrier that we live in

Of course that's not how we normally experience ourselves. We have a sense of being inside our body looking out through the senses. And the world is full of things which are not me. First and foremost, you are not me. I am me and in my bag I have a passport to prove it. Because I look in the passport and there's a photo of me. It doesn't look like you, so it must be me. This is what we take as a kind of basis of our existence: that we are separate beings and we can be defined in our separate being, by our particular set of qualities. We see that others eat different things from us, dress different from us, speak in different ways and it appears that the basis of me being me, is me. I am me because I am me. So, there's a kind of conceptual barrier that we live in. A kind of definition or proposition, which cannot be questioned. It's abit like Bluebeard's castle, where there's a room that the young wife should not go into. The husband says: `my dear, the castle is yours. Here are the keys. Go wherever you want. But, there's one room you don't go. Unfortunately she goes into the room and she meets her death. Similarly we have free access to the world. We can investigate whatever we like. You can be interested in football, astrology or chinese cooking, but the closed room that's me. Who am I? I am me.

Psychoanalysis - a chance of telling lots of stories about being me

Try to get a bit further in that and maybe you go for psychoanalysis. Then you get a chance of telling lots of stories about being me. I did this, I did that. But this story simply thickens the door, thickens the wall around me. We are alive, sentient, we have the vitality of being present, our experiences, but we don't quite know what it is to be alive. You might think, oh, I feel very alive when I walk in the mountains, or when I'm by the sea. But the actuality of being alive, here in this moment, is difficult to grasp. And our particular root capacity or skill is grasping. So, what can we grasp about ourselves? We can grasp many things about ourselves, but we can't grasp ourselves. And so, we don't really try. Because the paradigm or the modality of grasping illuminates many, many things and is the functional basis to elaborate stories about ourselves.

The central point of dzogchen is to be present as our mind

But just our present, our self, our here-ness grasping can't get any handle on that. This is the central point of inquiry in dzogchen. To be present as our life, to be present as our mind. Our mind reveals

what is happening. Does it reveal itself in the moment of revealing what is happening? So, we look at the room, we see different people, different shapes. We look out the window, we see how the weather is and so on. I don't know if it's true or not, but we believe that the table is not having the same kind of experience. You have to have a mind to know what's going on. So, here we are and we're having experience. Can we experience the experiencer?

How can we fully be ourselves when a large part of our existence is formulated through conceptual elaboration?

Usually we look for the experiencer as if it were another kind of experience. That's the reason why we're so good at telling stories about ourselves. If I ask you 'what's your favorite place in the world?', we can all say something, because we construct these stories to reassure ourselves. Tell me something about yourself. 'About' is very interesting. It's like a traffic roundabout. And in the middle of the roundabout is a little island. You can drive around, around the roundabout, but you don't get on the island unless you have an accident. So, one function of meditation practice is to stage a little accident. So, we sit in the meditation and we put our attention on the air going in and out of nostrils and we stop driving the little car of ourselves and after a while the mind becomes very peaceful. Who am I? Thoughts are not coming so much. I'm like a cow in a field. There must be more to life than this. The real central issue is: how can we fully be ourselves?

To be present in the moment of the arising of the experience, to allow the showing of our actual manifestation and to allow the ground of that manifestation to be indivisible from that manifestation. When we write, think or talk about ourselves, we have a flow of concept following concept. A large part of our existence is formulated through conceptual elaboration.

Receive. There's no need to interpret

But there is also something else going on: a peaceful evening, you look at a beautiful sunset. It is as if in these blessed moments the world is offering itself to you and when you open and receive this, there's no need to interpret. You're just there. And it's this quality of this just-there-ness, just being here, which the practice of Dzogchen is used to allow to be a continuous presence in our life.

It's not about flattening the experience

It's not that thoughts and feelings and so on are the enemy. It's not about flattening the experience. The practice should help us to be more alive, responsive, flexible and present in the world. So, the question is 'how to experience the experiencer?'

This division of subject and object

We are used to that everything outside appears an object and many times our own body appears as object and many aspects of our mind appear as object. Even a moment of pure subjectivity can in the next moment be reflected upon as if it were an object. And we often feel a need to run a commentary about our life. To eat some ice cream, put it in your mouth.... aah!

Commentary becomes a kind of validation of shared experience - in buddhism this is referred to as compassion

And then there seems to be some need to say something: aah... this is really good! That our humanity is confirmed by our capacity to comment on our experience. That we weave the net of our

connectivity. One of the problems that came up many times when I was doing a lot of couple therapy, would be the woman complaining that after sex the man would fall asleep and as we know snoring is a monologue and not a dialogue. So sex can be very unifying, but it can also be very individual, personal or deep and so there's a need to locate the experience in the world of interpersonal connection. If you just fall asleep, it can feel to the other person like an abandonment. And this is an indication of how commentary becomes a kind of seal or validation of the shared quality of experience. That's not wrong in itself. But it's a particular bias or privileging of experience towards extroversion. We are turned out to the world of communication. Generally, in buddhism this is referred to as compassion. This is how connect with other people, how we share things. And if we have good friends, we can share very unsettling experiences or facts about ourselves. By uncovering ourselves we can establish more sense of bond with the other. And a good conversation has a high degree of mutuality in it. There's a sense of coemergence. As if you were dancing with someone and the two bodies are evoking new directions of movement.

The quality of wisdom is direct awareness, not relying on the mediation of thoughts and feelings

However, if most of our time is spent in that, what's missing is the counterbalancing side of wisdom. Wisdom is to see the nature of the mind, which is the ground out of which the movement of the interpersonal field arises. Because when wisdom and compassion are not awakened to in their inseparability, our tendency is towards reification, towards turning the moment of manifestation into things. And this creates a seriousness and a solidification. Which has us turning into more a detailed side of manifestation, into trying to work things out and anxiously compose the structure of our world. Understanding the view and the practice in Dzogchen is a way of re-integrating or see the natural integration of wisdom and compassion. The quality of wisdom is direct awareness, not relying on the mediation of thoughts and memories and feelings, thoughts and so on.

Most of life is devoted to life maintenance, but you have a chance not just to be in this reactive flow of events

So, we'll have a look at what Chetsangpa says about this. This is the section or chapter called "Introducing the nature of the mind". In the beginning here he is saying again that we have the freedom and opportunities of a precious human birth which is so difficult to attain. In the whole of Berlin there are not so many people meeting together to understand more about their mind or meditation, but for sure they finding something interesting to do. Maybe repair their bicycle, go to the market, take the kids to the park – there is always something to do. Life goes on and then we die. We do a lot things before we die if we live long enough. Most of life is devoted to life maintenance: shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing. So, he's just giving a little reminder – maybe there's more to life than this. You have a chance not just to be in this reactive flow of events, but you can take a little time out and turn, look and think 'what is this all about?'

There are many things one can do. Ikebana, but they are not the path of dharma

Then he says: "if you want to gain the permanent result of buddha, it's necessary to practice the precious, holy dharma". What he's saying here is that there's nothing wrong with sufi dancing, but sufi dancing doesn't lead to buddhahood. Buddhadharma leads to buddhahood. In a city like Berlin, there are many things one can do. Ikebana, African drumming and there's nothing wrong with these, but they are not the path of dharma.

There are socio-economic factors in the manifestation of ambition in secular life, but also in religious life

Then he says: "it's said that the methods of following the holy dharma are vast, beyond comprehension, but, for we who meditate, the outer sutra commentaries and explanations and the inner tantra commentaries and explanations are not so important.

If you grow up on a farm it's important to gradually learn how to repair a tractor. And hopefully when you're about thirty, you can run the farm on your own. And this is the same as growing up in a monastery. Your parents send you there when you're about seven and you have a lot of education. You learn how to play the drums and the cymbals and how to do the dharma dance and the philosophical commentaries. And this gives you a good job. By the time you're thirty you may be the *umse* or the ritual specialist who does *tormas*. And then in the hierarchically arranged sitting order of the monasteries you move up through time until you get a more comfortable seat and tea in your bowl before the other ordinary people.

We have to be aware that there are socio-economic factors in the manifestation of ambition in secular life, but also in religious life. But he's saying that for we who meditate this kind of learning that is followed in monasteries in great detail is not so very necessary. Because you're learning a lot about dharma. But knowing a lot about dharma and living dharma as the basis of your existence is not the same.

You see what the mind is and then you realise everything is the mind

So then he says: "we need just one instruction, spoken by the holy, accomplished guru, by which we can understand our mind to the root of all samsara and nirvana. If this is really understood, then all the doctrine spoken by the buddha, both sutra, tantra and the doctrine literature of the great saints are fully present in your mind. When that occurs what is known as 'knowing one, freeing all', comes. The mind is the most important. It is the root of everything. Without our mind we would have no experience. Without the mind there would be no architecture, no nest building for birds. All activities occur as the movement of the energy of the mind. The learning you do at school or at an apprenticeship is the gathering together of the energy of the mind as it moves through the body. Without the mind this wouldn't happen. The skillful bodily adjustment to perception and what is perceived is vital in carpentry and metalwork and painting and so on. Everything depends on the mind. The garden here depends on the mind. If you don't have a mind, especially a mind operating in the human way, you don't have the perception that this is a garden. So, awakening to the nature of your own mind is awakening to the basis of all experience. To see the one and gaining all means: you see what the mind is and then you realise everything is the mind. There is nothing but the experience.

Phenomena are revealed by the mind

We have no access at all to self-existing objects, because our relation to the world is interpretive. We look outside and we see it's raining and we think 'oh that's quite nice'. If the sun were shining we might think, 'oh what are we doing in this little room, we could be outside having a good time. But the rain makes it much easier to practice dharma. But if you're a child and you want to go outside and play, it is very disappointing. We know this! Multiple interpretations of what we take to be the same phenomena. But the phenomena are revealed by the mind. From the point of view of dzogchen phenomena are in the mind. This will become clearer as we progress further in the text.

Everything is illusion. For this reason it is necessary to understand just this mind itself

Then he says: “if the mind is not understood” Understood is not quite the right term here. It means if you don’t awaken directly to the experience of being your mind. And if you don’t have that, although you may have many dharmas, such knowledge is vast with a hollow center. You know all, but cannot attain even one thing. Because as long as we establish our identity as part of an ongoing commentary, we can have lots to say about what is going on, but we don’t get the central point. The central point is: everything is illusion. It’s not that there’s nothing at all, but it’s not as real and as important as we take it to be. Then he says: “For this reason it is necessary to understand just this mind itself.” He says: if you wonder how this mind is to be understood, well, it’s through clear knowledge of the three aspects of ground, path and result.

Having a name is a ring by which you can be hooked, how we buy into being part of conversation

When you are born, when you come out of your mother’s body, you come into a world that’s already existing. You don’t know anything about that world, but gradually the structures of the environment you’re in, are revealed to you. While you were in your mother’s belly, you were also being thought and talked about. More or less preparations were made for your birth. We’re born into a conversation. And you’re introduced to yourself through conversation. We’re given a name and the name defines you and separates you from other children. You learn to identify with your name and come when you’re called. Having a name is a ring by which you can be hooked. When I’m walking down the street and somebody says: “James!” I turn my head. Maybe they’re not calling me, but, uh, I’m James. What a ridiculous thing to say – I am James, I am a word. This is how we buy into being part of conversation. This is the false ground. This is how we are grounded in the flow of signifiers. We’re grounded in the shimmering, vibrating nature of the semiotic web. Which means we ground ourselves in ideas. And the ideas are, uhm, multiple. And they vibrate and resonate with other ideas.

The ground of your own being is there from the very beginning. Your personality, your sense of who you are, was not

So, having to learn to swim in this great sea of ideation. At first we do a kind of doggy paddle. And some of us spend our whole life just doing that. But you can become more graceful, swim like a swan. The key thing is, you are moving in a sea of movement. So I’m highlighting this in reference to the ground. Because when it says ground or base it means something which is not changing. So it says:”to consider how the ground abides, the actual condition of one’s own mind is primordial, uncontrived and effortlessly arising.” Here he is speaking out of his own meditative experience to say, if you allow yourself to see how you are, what you will find is, that the ground of your own being is primordial. It’s there from the very beginning. Your personality, your sense of who you are, was not there from the beginning of your life. Through the ceaseless interaction of parents, books and school and so on you develop more of your potential and become the unique, particular constellation of your self. This is not primordial. This is what’s developed through time, through causes and conditions. So primordial means that which has been there since the beginning and has never changed since then. It is the ground or basis within which we are able to register all these movements or constructions of our selves.

The door to the land of buttons is closed

We have already lost many aspects of ourselves. It’s not normal for me to play with toys on the

floor. When I was a child one of my favorite things was my mother's box of buttons. All kinds of different buttons. And I'd turn it upside down and I'd play and make patterns. That was something very precious on a rainy day, but not now. The door to the land of buttons is closed. Maybe one day if I end up on a geriatric ward one day..... But, we can all remember worlds that we occupied that we don't go into now. As adults it's very rare to climb trees. Particular perceptions of the world, particular pathways into pleasure that once opened, become closed. This indicates the impermanent nature of the constellations which when they're arising for us make us think this is me, this is you.

Because the ground is very difficult to put in language, the very traditional image of the mirror is helpful

He says it is uncontrived. In other words, it is not put together with some intention. There is no method for the production. It is there as itself. It is a given. It is just how it is. And this is our ground our basis. All the aspects of our social, interpersonal or even private identity are grounded on transient factors, but our mind has no unreliable ground. It has the secure ground of having been there from the very beginning.

But this ground is not just sitting there like a stone. Although it is unchanging in itself, it is also effortlessly arising. It shows itself as the field of experience.

This is very difficult to put in language. Because if we say that it shows 'itself' as the field of experience, the field of experience is not 'the mind'. It's how and what the mind shows, but it's not showing the mind itself.

So, this is where the very traditional image of the mirror is helpful. The mirror shows itself, that is to say its clarity, its brilliant quality. It shows itself through showing reflections which are not it. If you look at a piece of the wall and you have that experience of seeing the wall and then you turn and look at a mirror, it's a very different experience. The wall just shows wall, but the mirror shows you. I'm in the mirror, no I'm here, but I'm in the mirror. The mirror shows what is not the mirror. Because if I move away and you look in the mirror, the mirror shows you, not me. When we look into a mirror, we tend to be caught by the reflection. That's what we fixate on. But what the mirror is showing is its empty clarity. I will show whatever is placed in front of me. What I show is me and not me. It is me because I'm showing it, but it is not me, because you can't infer that I am defined by the shape of the reflection. If that image makes sense to you, then you can understand the mind more clearly.

Lhundrub

The mind is effortlessly arising. In Tibetan it's *lhundrub*. *Lhundrub* means 'formed immediately, formed instantly'. Our experience arises all at once. What we see is the display of the mind. When we forget the mind, we see all these many different things, which, relying on interpretive explanations we take to be self-existing, disparate objects. But the world arises like a reflection, like a rainbow. The reflection is in the mirror. All the world is in the mind.

The basis of the mind is not like Tschernobyl

Now if you start with an assumption that your mind is in your skull, this is very difficult to understand. What we want to do here is not start with a concept. Of course I'm offering you a lot of dharma concepts, but these are leading towards meditation, which we'll do later. Because samsara begins with mis-identification, with mis-taking, with ignoring how things are and imagining them to

be something else. So we want to learn to look in the simplest way, so that we don't add our worldly interpretations, our worldly accretions to our immediate experience. "The basis of the mind is not made by the meditation of the buddhas and is not affected by the stupidity of sentient beings". This is good news because, even if we are not doing very well in our life and see a lot of faults by ourselves, the faults have not been absorbed into the ground. This is not like Tschernobyl, where the radioactive substance seeps into the soil. This is like the glass on the window. When the window gets dirty, the glass doesn't get dirty. The dirt is on the surface of the glass. The glass is always clean. It's just offering, very generously, hospitality to the dirt that passes by. The glass is working in harmony with Mrs. Merkel. It says 'poor, homeless refugee dust come, settle. The difficulty of course is, german culture will shift if you have a lot of immigrants, but the window doesn't shift. This is the big issue in life isn't it: we want things to stay the same and to change. Actions have consequences. This is why the ground of the mind is different from the interactive patterns of mental experience. On the level of what arises as the content of our experience, we can be very generous on Monday, but incredibly selfish on Tuesday. Which is the basis for a lot of the political turbulence at the moment. We are unstable creatures. But here he is saying the mind is not like that. It's not created by the good deeds or the meditation of the buddhas and it's not affected or contaminated by the bad behaviour or craziness of the ordinary people.

Due to causes and conditons new shapes arise

Mind's original status does not depend on causes and conditions. When we look around, everything we see has causes and conditions. Depending ton the climate, different kinds of plants will do well or not so well in the garden. On the basis of the reunification of Germany the political center shifts from Bonn to Berlin and feeds into this huge amount of change in the city. The Berlin of fourty years ago was very different. What is happening now would have been unimaginable then. Due to ever changing patterns of causes and conditions new shapes arise and they in turn open doors to new shapes and possibilities. We'll take a little break now and I would encourage you to see what causes and conditions give rise to the various things that you encounter.

Something can't come out of nothing, if that something is truly existing

We continue with the text. Now it says the mind in its simple form is void, without inherent self-substance and free of all conceptual elaboration. So this void, empty what does this mean? It means there's nothing to catch. There's nothing for you to find. There is everything, everything that we see all around us and the basis of this everything is nothing. How is this possible? Something can't come out of nothing, if that something is truly existing! But as the many buddhist texts say again and again, everything that we see is like illusion, like a rainbow in the sky. Also, if we say something can't come out of nothing, it's as if we have two separate territories. To leave the empty and go into the terrain of the something. This is the style of our dualistic conceptualisation. It works with binary oppositions and polarities. But this nothing is both completely empty and completely full. It's full of its own clarity, which manifests as all that we experience. The empty aspect of the mind - you don't find anything there and with the clarity aspect of the mind, you don't find anything that you can hold on. So it looks like empty and full are polarities, but they are identical in their ungraspability.

Ghosts playing with echoes

Although we can tell stories about our childhood and the past, this is the experience of ghosts playing with echoes. Oh I remember when I was seven, I used to have a lovely little bicycle.' I

remember when I was seven` - this is a ghost. So echoes come back to us through time. It seems apprehendable, graspable. You know what I'm talking about when I say `I remember when I was seven`, because you also are full of ghosts and we create for ourselves the illusion that the past is somehow available for us. But really the past is gone and the future hasn't come. Here in this moment it is shifting. Nothing to grasp.

Not a basis for existential despair

It is through our own grasping and our solidification of these empty concepts that are like clouds in the sky, that we create for ourselves opposition between something and nothing. Nothing shows everything which is also nothing. This is not a basis for existential despair. Just because we can't hold on to something, doesn't mean that we are not alive and participating.

The world is *lila* the play of divine energy

The basis for participation is play. If we take it very seriously, then we don't know how to play. The notion of play you find in hinduism and buddhism. This world is the play of the *lila*, the play of the divine energy. As we recognise that the past is gone, the future hasn't come and that we're standing not on any solid ground, we need to lighten up. If you're very heavy and dense with all your worries and presuppositions and concerns you're going to fall. Some of you remember the film *Dumbo* - a very important part of western culture, because it's about how an elephant overcomes its fear. Like all good fairytales it begins with persecution. Poor little Dumbo, the elephant, is born with very big ears, but then he gets the idea that he can fly. And then he can fly a little bit, but as soon as he doubts that he can fly, he falls down. But, luckily, he's given a magic feather and as long as he has the magic feather, he can fly. So, we're the same. We are born with very big ears. We are born with the two wings of wisdom and compassion, but we don't exercise them very much. So, we take refuge in the buddha, our little feather and we remember the buddha and swush, swush.

I am the appearance of emptiness moving in the field of empty appearances

Everything is empty. This can be terrifying or liberating. Everything is empty? What about me? So, we may fall very heavily. Everything is empty. Oh so it is. It's not nothing at all. It's appearance and emptiness. And I also am the appearance of emptiness, moving in the field of empty appearances. So, again and again, we visit the topic of emptiness. It's the most central understanding present in tibetan buddhism, simply indicating that there is nothing to hold on.

Learning to swim

So what is the gesture of grasping. If you are floating in the sea and you don't know how to swim, you grasp onto a piece of drift wood. But if you can swim, you don't need to do the grasping. Swimming means that you trust your relation with water. When children are learning to swim, often they hold a piece of polystyrene in front of them, simply to strengthen the movement of their legs. But when you can let go of that and move your arms, then you're really swimming. Swimming means making friends with water. Finding a way of moving your body that will allow the water to support you. So, this is why we do calming meditation. To help us relax our anxiety and the turbulence that comes from it. And then we find ourselves present in the moving world, moving in the moving world.

We don't need to add thoughts to make sense of it, we need to enter into it

And then it's saying, 'mind itself is free of all conceptual elaboration'. It's just simple. It doesn't need anything added to it. We don't need to add thoughts to make sense of it, we need to enter into it. So that means, it's not just our grasping at the outer phenomena that we need to relax, but relaxing our grasping at thoughts, as the explicators of the world. This will become clearer in the text.

The mind is not resting on anything. Our personal identity is resting on a lot

So, at the beginning, mind itself is without source and so is void. There is nothing before the mind. It doesn't come from somewhere else, it is always here. And having no source it hasn't been produced as something and so it's empty of any additional quality. In the middle it's without resting place and so it's void. The mind is not resting on anything. Our personal identity is resting on a lot. For many people their identity is strongly linked to their work or to their family relationships or the country that they come from or their hobbies. That is to say we are used to our sense of self resting onto formations of links to the world. But the mind isn't resting on anything, because it doesn't have any shape or colour or substance. My glass of water is resting on a saucer, which is resting on a table which is resting on the floor, which is resting on the foundations of the house, which is resting on the earth. Every something is resting on something else. But nothing doesn't rest on anything. This is the fundamental freedom of the mind.

In our lives we are always going somewhere, but mind goes nowhere

"And at the end it has no destination and so is void." The mind is not going anywhere. In our lives we are always going somewhere. On one big level we are moving towards death, on a more local level we are moving towards lunch. We are intentional creatures. We are always about something. And we live in a world which is reminding us that there are so many things which we should be doing. Sort our papers for the accountant..., endless things to do. There is no end to this sense of 'I must get on with my life'. But these pathways of activity are revealed to us because we have a mind that is aware. Thoughts come and go and are fundamentally unreliable, although we rely on them so much. Awareness is always available and is always reliable and yet, we rely on it so little.

If you look for it in the manner of a thing, you'll never find anything

"Minds essence cannot be grasped at, as this or that and so it is void." he's using many different ways of indicating that your mind is not a thing, is not similar to all the other things you are used to. And so, in lieu of the practice bit, if you look for it in the manner of a thing, you'll never find it. And this may be why meditation is difficult to do. We are used to relying on our thoughts, so relaxing and opening seems more difficult, than just grasping at the next thought that arises. It is without form and colour and so is void. It has no shape. You can't say, it begins here and ends there. If it had a colour, like red or blue, we could distinguish it from other things, but not everything is red or blue. The mind itself has no distinguishing characteristics whatsoever.

Clarity is the revelation of our life experience

But then he continues: "however, this voidness is not an empty annihilation, for mind's natural clarity is pure and all pervading." If the emptiness of the mind was an annihilation, a kind of post-apocalyptic, a post-armageddon kind of destruction, then life would be finished. It's not that kind of

a void. It's just empty and open. Within which its own clarity arises without effort and clarity is the revelation of our life experience. So, we look around the room to see all these things. We can identify and name the things we can see. For example: I see a metal pole supporting a wooden beam. Relying on these concepts, I inform myself, that indeed there is a wooden beam resting on a metal pole. This is the world as it is revealed through concepts. What do I see? I see what the mind shows. All that I see is the way of showing of the mind. When you look in the mirror, the mirror's clarity shows itself as whatever is reflecting. The difference is for the mirror to work, you have to have some extra objects somewhere else, which is being reflected. Now, when we say everything is the clarity of the mind, it doesn't mean, that each of us is an incredible magician, who is inventing or imagining everything we see. Because when I say it is my mind, it is not my ego mind, which self-referential, would then turn me into a very inflated being, if I thought I was creating everything.

Within clarity, as a subset, there is me

But as he was describing before, the mind has no shape or colour, it doesn't rest on anything or come from anywhere. It is infinite. So I, as James, am the showing of my mind. Empty awareness reveals this field of experience, within which I am. I am part of this field of experience. I'm not an individual apart from it. I'm ceaselessly interacting with the world and I know this because I'm aware of it. If I say: 'I am aware of it', we tilt infinite awareness toward a personal consciousness. So, in terms of my personal consciousness, I am aware that I'm sitting in this chair, because I'm having many feedback loops about the pressure of my bum on the seat and so on. But there is also a much wider awareness when we just relax a little bit, everything is here. This is arising for me. The status of what I encounter is, that it is fundamentally experience. It is thisness. It is a unified field of experience. It all comes at once. And then we can chop it up with our concepts: I see the closed door, I see the glass doors to the garden. And by applying this identification, I slice up this world, which arrived all at once, into a series of things. This is what he means, when he says: "the mind's natural clarity is pure and all pervading." All of this comes at once. This is the clarity of the mind. And within that clarity, if you like as a subset, there is me! I am en-worlded and the world is en-emptied. And this is important. This is why he says 'the ground comes first'. It is not an annihilation of me, but I am an expression. We are each expressions of clarity, moving in the field of clarity, which is fundamentally empty of self-substance.

Objective materialism is an incorrect view

Mind itself is the maker of all samsara. Whatever you can imagine. If you're a science fiction writer, planets, strange creatures, whatever you can imagine, this is what you imagine. The mind is implicated in everything. We live in a culture of objective materialism, a world of things which exist because they are there in themselves. And this is what he says is an incorrect view. Because the only way we know that there are things out there is because we have a mind. We can't take our mind out of the world, because this world is revealed through our mind. In particular it is revealed through the particular formation of our sense organs. Which allows for certain features to be highlighted and others to be hidden. Nothing of any kind anywhere can occur without the mind. As soon as you think about it, it's to do with your mind. If you don't think about it, it doesn't exist. Because you'll only know when you remember 'shit, I'm too late, the shops are closed!'. The existence of the open shop has been removed and now you have the existence of the closed shop, with you standing outside thinking 'where is my milk?'. Whether you're happy or sad, whether you're lonely or surrounded by friends or family, this is all experience.

Within awareness arise thoughts, interpretations, memories, plans....

Who is the experiencer? Usually we say 'It's me'. But if I say I am the experiencer, as I say that, I experience myself saying: 'I am the experiencer'. So, maybe there's another James inside me. So James no. 2 is aware of what James no. 1 is saying. But just as you had in the old East Germany a Stasi to keep an eye on things, you have to have a stasi watching a stasi watching a stasi. So now I need to have an infinite number of Jameses each commenting on what the other James is thinking. But it's not that way. Our awareness of when we're walking and talking and eating and so on, this awareness is just always there. Within our awareness, revealed by our awareness comes the current of thoughts, interpretations, memories, plans and so on.

Direct experience versus conceptual elaboration

Then he says: "never changing, it effortlessly arises". The mind is empty and full. The mind never changes because it's just empty, it's pervasive, infinite, empty openness. And within it, everything is effortlessly arising, because this is your direct experience. When outside, the houses, the trees, everything is there. Of course, in the conceptual world, relying on the interpretations of the three times, you can say 'this building was from the period of 1940'. This is something you tell the building. But the building's showing of itself is now.

When he says, it is devoid of conceptual elaboration: if you know this city well, you can walk around this city, describing everything. You can become a tour guide. You can tell Berlin what Berlin is. But Berlin shows itself, infinitely, ever changingly. The tour guide is not travelling along saying 'oh, that's little Mary going to school and she's not very good at grammar'. But for the little girl that's very important, because she has some anxiety about school that day, because they have to do grammar. The richness of the world is beyond description. Grasp and grasp again and again as we do, we never catch it.

In terms of the ego the world is excessive. One of my friends has a book entitled *100 places to see before you die*. But in this time there are millions of places to see before you die. But that would be impossible. A book with that title would make you very sad. But a 100 ... maybe. So, there we see the function of selective attention. Highlighting special features of the world and attributing special importance and pushing so much - the most, - into the background, to be unattended to.

When he's saying, that this manifestation of the clarity of the mind is effortlessly arising, it means everything is effortlessly arising.

The basic secret of our limited lives

If we look out the window we see the trees. There are hundreds of thousands of leaves and we get them all at once! If we had to describe them, it would take a long time. But they are given to us in an instant. But what kind of tree is that? Then you bring in the concepts and you chop it up, because you know: that's an oak tree. I'm gonna look at the oak tree, because I know it's an oak tree. I don't know what the other ones are, so, I won't pay any attention to them. This is the basic secret of our limited lives. I know what I like and I like what I know. That makes a very small circle.

There is too much to know. We see all these things in the world and we feel a bit stupid. From the point of view of the dharma, that's because we misunderstand the nature of knowing. All that clarity requires is open receptivity. You get everything and then you can move within that. But if you start with selective attention, you're always going to develop more of the same. Which is why they say 'grasping is the root of suffering'. Because we can only grasp a little. The botanist, who knows all the plants in the garden, might not know much about the history and engine types of all the cars in the street. In terms of conceptual elaboration we're all limited. There are so many things in this

world we don't know. But when we relax and open, everything is here. And we're not, then, moving in a world of strange objects, but we're moving within the radiance of our own mind. We are radiance moving within radiance. This is not what we learn in school.

Inherent self-substance

Everything possible appears, but without inherent self-substance. Inherent self-substance is in some ways quite a strange notion. So in my hand I'm holding a glass. I say a glass, because it seems to be one particular glass. If we know what glass is, we can recognise what glass is. We are able to formulate an interpretation of what this is. The glass seems to have its own identity as an entity. It is a thing with a top and a bottom, a front, a back and you can list its qualities. We don't have any doubt, that this is a knowable object. And it seems knowable, because the thingness of the glass allows us to put a circle around it and see it as being internally identifiable as inherent essence. The glassness of the glass is inherent in the glass. I don't need to worry that it's maybe a dangerous dog that is going to bite me. It's just glass (shrugs). Because it's a glass it won't be anything else. Now if you were baking biscuits you could turn the glass around and use it to cut biscuits. With our imagination we could think of thousands of uses for this (glass). But because we're sensible, rational adults, we put our imagination in a box and confirm that this is really a glass. So when buddhist texts speak about inherent self-nature *dag gyud* or *atman*, having a sense of self, being a thing, being an identifiable object, they're trying to show the way in which it is the mind which attributes the identity to the object. The identity is not intrinsic in the object.

The story of the glass

Now the thing about this object is, it has to be somewhere. When I get tired of holding it, I have to do something with it. So, I could put it down. So, before there was a glass in the hand and now there's a glass on the table. The glass always has an environment, a context. When you see the glass, you take the hand for granted. By focusing on the glass, the hand becomes invisible. But we need the hand, otherwise it falls on the floor. The glass is always somewhere. We are always somewhere. The environment is not secondary. We are moving in space, as part of space, in conversation with space. The glass is here due to causes and circumstances. It hasn't always been here. It's been somewhere in a shop. Before it was in the shop, it was with the distributor, before that, it was in the factory where it was made. These causal circumstances are inseparable from the cup or glass. And due to causes and circumstances, after some time, it will get chipped and then it will be put out. Nowadays it will probably be recycled and become another glass formation. The forces of maintenance that allow this glass to be here are implicit in the glass. When we make them explicit by talking about them, it seems a bit strange, because we usually disregard the contextual and supportive factors, which are actually part and parcel of the thusness of the glass. When you're at school, you often get a task like 'today we have to write the story of the glass': I was born in a great, roaring, hot fire. I was poured liquid into a mold, they packed me and shook me moving in a big truck all through the Germany, but luckily a kind man in orange robes gave me refuge in this buddhist center, where people treat me with great caution and respect. But I have heard gossip that some of my brothers and sisters end up in bars, where people get drunk and smash the glasses on the ground (sob!). So, all of this is possible, because we imagine that the glass has a life. This is our mind, our creativity, our interpretation. Without the mind there is no glass. It's really helpful to keep looking and looking, 'til you see, that this is the case. Because these are the two choices: either this is a dead object, or, it's a vibrant moment of my experience, part of this changing field of light and sound and sensation, ever moving.

Patternings of clarity

When we understand it as experience, then the clarity of the recognition that everything is the mind, is instantly there under all conditions. So, the particular moments that arise are clarity, patternings of clarity. They don't leap out and become things in themselves, neither are they just collapsed into just being emptiness. We find ourselves, fully present, moment by moment, in the vital field of clarity.

Using the formulation 'my' is the normal way in which we create the illusion of self-existing entities

"Mind is profound, precise and beyond all measurement." So when it's profound, it means you can't get to the bottom of it in any way and it's precise, because it is what is and it's not anything else. Whatever you imagine or tell yourself what the mind is, that is not what the mind is. And it's beyond all measurement because being without beginning or end, you then can't find an edge to it, delineating it from anything else. It is beyond relativity. "It may seem to exist, but is actually void, due to the nature or quality of entities and signs." So, I can say 'my glass is in my hand and I know this using my mind'. So using the formulation 'my', my feet, my shoes, my mind, the normal way in which we create the illusion of self-existing entities, I can apply this to the mind and talk about my mind, as if it was something I possess. But, he's saying, that when this appears to be the case, when you have a mind that you designate as your mind, this is a construct, an interpretation. You may then think, well, there is no mind. But then he says: "it may seem not to exist, yet it shows many illusory forms". Experience continues. We wouldn't have this experience without an experiencer and yet, we can't find a defined and enduring entity, which is the experiencer. The ever empty mind reveals itself as a clarity which pervades the space of awareness, but doesn't fill the space as a thing.

Within this hospitality there is a place for you

So, we'll have a break for lunch in a moment. You might go outside and look around. You walk out the front door. You see trees, houses, cars, people walking. Moment by moment this is complete. You turn your head one way and you have a whole new vista and it's all there. Then you turn your head the other way and there's a whole new world. It happens at once and this goes on all day long. Now you can't pour a liter into this cup because it has a limit, but all day long you encounter billions and billions of phenomena. There's a lot of pieces of grass growing out there. The empty mind embraces everything because it shows everything. The mind is not a thing. It's infinite openness, is its hospitality to the richness of what is manifesting. And within this hospitality there is a place for you. And you get up and you go and you get your plate and you get your food and you put it in your mouth and daily life continues to unfold within this great mystery. Guten Appetit!

Awareness – a pre-cognitive intelligence

"Mind's original nature is beyond thought and it does not become an object of thought". So this is very, very important to us and it's a kind of wake up call to say that the domain we're used to, the practice we're used to, is not sufficient to take us where we want to go. Thought cannot reach this original nature and the original nature is not an object that can be apprehended by a thought. So again, we have to be clear about the relation between wisdom and compassion. Thoughts are

necessary for communication and connection with others, but they don't help us to awaken to the actuality of our mind itself. If the mind is not an object, it is like pure subjectivity. It finds its aliveness through just being open. It's impossible really to describe this in language. For example, if you were running down a steep hillside or skiing down a fast slope, you can't work out what to do, because the speed of your movement through the environment is faster than your thought can process. So you have to trust your intuitive connection with what is happening. In situations like that, people often describe they suddenly swerved. They don't know why, but it was good. So the awareness, which is the quality of this open mind, is like an intuition in which we have knowing prior to thinking, is a pre-cognitive intelligence. Our intuition reveals our participation in the situation. When you start to think about a situation, it separates you from that situation and then tries to build a conceptual bridge back to what you've separated from.

Mind cannot be described, but experienced

Then he says "it's impossible to say what it is like". Maybe we should just stop here. There's a lot of words in the dharma. But if it's impossible to say what it is like, this is like a very helpful warning to us. Whenever we seem to have come to a conclusion, i.e., to have found out what is going on, this is just another mode of deception. The mind cannot be known in the manner of knowing an object. But we can relax into being present as the mind itself. It's a direct..., it's not even an experience. It's a direct showing. A traditional example for this is, when somebody doesn't know what the word 'sweet' means. You can try again and again with words to explain what sweet is, what it tastes like. But 'tastes like' again is always one removed. But if you just take a spoonful of honey and put it onto their tongue.... Oh, this sweet! Then you ask them, now you know what sweet is, can you tell me? It's not possible. So, it's just like that. We have our mind and we come into being fully present as our mind. It's undeniable, because it's there and yet it's not a thing that can be described.

There is no objective proof

Generally in our modern world, things have to be describable to be believed. The kind of basic benchmark for science is that you have a hypothesis, you carry out an experiment, you have a result and you replicate it and then you get someone not concerned with your programme to replicate it. And that is taken as an objective proof. You look at the data. And if it can be repeated getting the same data, then it must be correct. But this is not about creating some kind of product. There is no objective proof. So how would we know if we're not just cheating ourselves? Well, we stay with the practise. If we come to a conclusion, just stay with the conclusion. If the conclusion is conceptual, it will vanish. If it is a showing of the mind itself, it will continue, because the mind is, but isn't as an object.

Mind cannot be qualified in any way

"Beyond thought, it is inexpressible. It's not touched by any good thoughts or qualities whatsoever." This is often referred to as *kadag* or primordial purity. Which means, if you're thinking about it in terms of language, if you have a noun, you can qualify its meaning with adjectives and adverbs. You have something and then you can say it's good, it's bad, you can say it's good but not quite as good as that. You can evaluate and compare and contrast it with something else. This in relation to that. But the mind is not a 'this'. It IS, but it's not something that you can define as a something. Being empty, it cannot be qualified in any way. There's nothing to which one can assert a good or a bad quality on. It's not altered by circumstances. Anything in this world can

be altered by circumstances. There used to be many statues of Karl Marx around, but most of them seem to have fallen down. I saw a lonely one sitting under a big tree by the side of a big road. At one time it was very important. People would stand there and make speeches and celebrate this founding father of this whole lineage of this way of being. Because we take something like a statue, representing something as a thing to be qualified – wonderful or rubbish.

Judgements and evaluations are a confirmation of the ego

One of the important side effects of being able to say `Karl Marx is great, or Karl Marx is like a demon is, that by asserting my opinion about Karl Marx, I'm confirming that I am a smart guy. When we talk about the object, we are implicitly talking about the subject. The food here is good. That's about me. I am confirming my existence as someone who can make a valid judgement. It may appear as if I'm talking about things out there that have nothing to do with me, but there's a kind of undertow, which is a confirmation of my own existence. So this is why we have to be quite careful with making judgements and evaluations. Because explicitly it is about the object, implicitly it's about the ego as an agent of truth.

Karma - pattern influencing pattern, influencing pattern

“Mind's original nature is not obscured by good or bad karmic conditions” Karma means activity and the consequences of activity. An activity is a movement of energy in the field of energy. Energy makes an impact on other energetic structures. So you can make a cup of coffee, you can put your shoes on. In all of these situations energy is operating on energy. It makes a mark. As you put your foot in the shoe, the leather expands a bit to give room for the foot. Energy influences energy. But energy does not influence nothing. It would have nothing to work on. If you're a potter and you run out of clay, what are you gonna do? The hands are ready, the wheel is ready, but, oh, where's the clay? So this is what it means. Karma as this interactive field in which we experience the consequences of our previous actions and in reacting to these situations now we prepare tendencies which will now manifest in future times. The individual self or the ego lives in a world of patterning. We are all born with our slice of luck, our share of qualities. Some babies die in the womb, other people are born and live to be a hundred. Some people live to a hundred but with a lot of pain in the last forty years, some people live to be forty but are very healthy until they die. That is to say, there are many different patterns to existence. The patterning of our existence is something we can influence, but we don't totally determine it. So this is what karma is – pattern influencing pattern influencing pattern.

Good and bad karma - the intention behind an action

These patterns are interactive. If you go to where a river is meeting the sea, you can see these complex turbulences of the meeting of water. The amount of water coming down the river may be influenced by the melting snow and so on. The sea is influenced by the movement of the tides, by the wind and so on. This is like our individual energy moving within the world of energy. When the tide is going out, the river flows into the receding water. And there's a kind of synergy or harmony there. Now when the tide is coming up and rising to the pulse of the river, you get turbulence. So this is how we experience our life. Sometimes we seem to be in harmony with the circumstances around us and we seem to almost be carried on a wave of good fortune and things go easily and at other times everything seems to be a terrible struggle. And the difference between good karma and

bad karma is whether the intention behind an action was harmonious and complementary or disharmonious and conflictual. If I decide to steal some money then my intention is to help myself. If I was not only a thief, but a bad ass thief, I might also be happy, that you're unhappy. My intention is against you and for me. But if I see that you look hungry and you have no money and I give you twenty Euros, I want you to be happy. My action is harmonious with the line of your condition. I am for the other.

Being a good girl or a bad girl is not the path to awakening

So good karma is action arising out of being for the other. And it results in situations in which the other, including the environment, is for you. When you have the development of bad karma, it's on the basis of having thoughts and actions and satisfaction with the action, which is disharmonious and the consequence is to have disharmonious experiences yourself of the environment being against you. These experiences generate our feelings of happiness and sadness. Nobody has happiness that lasts forever. Nobody has suffering that lasts forever. These rippling movements of pattern formation do not touch the ever open actuality of the mind itself. That means you won't become a buddha by being a good girl. Being a good girl or a bad girl is not the path to awakening. But it is the path to having good or bad conditions. These are two registers of identity, they are not identical. Although it is very important to practice the virtue and help other people, that in itself is not enough to help open up to our situation.

Holding on to signifiers to establish knowledge

“Our awareness is not stained by relying on all the impurities of relying on signs.” And this links to the next sentence. “None of the names of all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana can be applied to it.” This is a theme that you find a lot in buddhist philosophy - that we get lost according to signs. For example Padamasambhava in one of his texts says that looking in the distance and seeing a man in the field when in fact it's a pillar. You take a shape and interpret it according to your sign onto it. It looks like a man, it reminds me of a man, it is a man. So, we hold on to the sign, the signifier as the basis for establishing knowledge. Today is Saturday. That's important to know. In real terms it is completely meaningless. If you were lying in bed dying. Dear god protect me from dying on Saturday! Dear God protect me from dying – that would make sense. But it helps to know what day of the week it is. These are conventional signs. Conventions are the way in which we cut up the world. Friday is holy for the muslims, Saturday is holy for the jews, Sunday is holy for the christians. It's up for grabs. We make these things up. There is no intrinsic holiness in one day or another. But if you believe, if you invest that conventional system with importance then of course, Saturday you shouldn't do any cooking or drive a car. We live in a world of signs, of attribution of meaning which are applied on the basis of convention. They're not intrinsically true, but they're conventionally true.

There are many paths to get lost

So what it says here is, that mind is not touched by such conventions. Although we can learn a lot, we can learn all of the names of samsara and nirvana, none of the can be applied to the mind. There are many, many buddhist bits of information you can acquire. You could learn the sanskrit names for the eight hot hells and the eight cold hells. That's something you could learn. But why would you bother? You might get a job. You would do it for a purpose. Conventional signs are like money. Of course money also is based on a conventional sign. And so things become important or not important, but they cannot reach emptiness. Really what he's doing here is saying: little red riding

hood, you want to get to granny's house and you have to go into the forest. But in the forest there are many dangerous paths and you don't want to get lost. This is what he is saying. There are many paths to get lost. If you want to awaken to your mind, don't follow the path of signs. But the only path I know is the path of signs. When I follow the path of signs I know where I'm going. Unfortunately I haven't reached granny's house yet. I need to go down a road where I don't know what will happen. I'm not going down that road, because I like what I know and I know what I like.

Be with the thought without relying on it

This is really what he's saying in an elaborate way and it's completely important because when you sit and do the practice you follow the thought. Thoughts are a good friend. You're never lonely. 24 hours a day you ask for a thought, you get a thought. In fact you don't only get one, you get a lot. That's what we're used to, so the key issue in the meditation practice is how to be with the thought without relying on the thought. When you start to read the thought, read it as sign, when you enter into that semiotic interpretation, then you're lost. We have learned that signs are meaningful, but signs are conventions. When there are double yellow lines on the road, you shouldn't park, because you'll get a ticket. It can cost you a lot of money if you don't want to learn that, but it's a convention. The convention gives you the sense that you can read the world. So the renunciation aspect of the practice is, that we have to privilege not-knowing as being more helpful in this circumstance than knowing. Not knowing. Let's see. Not knowing.... So many ways we have of mobilising our thoughts, our knowledge, but it takes us to where we don't want to go.

Thoughts are useful for some things, but they don't lead to emptiness

Again it's not about saying 'thoughts are bad, they're just useful for some things and not for others. Methods need to be applied where they are useful. Thinking doesn't lead to emptiness. Not knowing opens the path to emptiness.

So when we sit in the practice we allow the flow of experience to come and go, which includes the flow of signs, signifiers, memories and then we let it pass. I want to find out what it's like being present, without that being mediated through the interpretation of thought.

Binary opposition fragments the world

So, then he says: "mind's original nature is free of all limits of holding to duality, such as permanent and impermanent, hope and doubt, inhibiting and encouraging, rejecting and accepting, good and bad, large and small, top and bottom, bound and free, happy and sad and so on. One of the terms that we come across reading this kind of buddhist texts is 'non-duality'. Non-duality means not one and not two. A common symbol for that is these gods in sexual embrace. The bodies are joined together, so it appears to be one. There are two people, but they are joined, so it's not one, but it's not two because it's as if they are one. The structure of our basis in samsara is different, because it works on the basis of binary opposition. Which is a separative movement. It's the law of exclusion. If it's an apple, it's not a tomato, if it's a pear, it's not a grape, because pearness excludes grapeness. When we say pear we are affirming this is a pear and we are simultaneously stating that it's not an apple or a dog or a pig. Polarities or binary oppositions serve to fragment the world. It's the basis for creating the thought that there are separate entities. The apple-ness of the apple is held by its own qualities and by the exclusion of the qualities pertaining to other entities.

Polarities can't establish a truth

We become intelligent through our capacity to discern the difference between phenomena. So, small children learn that in winter they put on their scarf and in the summer they run around in their swimming costume. This is winter, this is summer. This is bedtime, this is time to get up. I know you're awake, but you have to go back to bed, because it's not the time to get up. But I'm awake! But it's not the time to be awake! This is quite difficult for children. The concept is being put onto their head like an iron clamp and they're being squeezed into what mummy says is more important than it is for me.

But gradually we get used to the constraint of the concept, because it's also an extension of ourself, it's the currency of the world and it empowers us to interact with others. What we have to see in this critique of the polarities is that not only do they not apply to the mind itself, but the polarities can't establish a truth. This summer was really hot in London. It was good. The temperature got up to 28°. It's amazing! I mean in Pakistan they only had 45°. So, hot in London is not like hot in Pakistan. So when we say 'it's really hot today', that's relative to your expectations. You speak as if you're saying something definite, but only because we are excluding all the other factors, which would show, it's not very hot at all. But once you get into this semiotic web, the interlinking of all language movements which is deeply structured around these binary oppositions, once you enter that, the possibilities of self-deception are endless. Cheating ourselves is the most popular pastime.

Accepting and rejecting

"Mind's original nature was not made by anyone" This is going to say the same things again. "It cannot be described by any size or dimension. It's free of all partiality." But this is good, because it means there are no entry criteria. You don't have to be a good person to awaken. It's not created by good deeds. It's open to everything. It offers impartial hospitality to whatever is arising. Now this is important for meditation, because what we find in meditation is that we're caught in this move of accepting and rejecting. Our ego is prejudiced. We have likes and dislikes. On the basis of this we would like to have more thoughts that make us feel good and have fewer thoughts that make us feel bad. This is the discriminating function of our consciousness. But awareness is impartial.

Whatever comes, comes, whatever goes, goes

So in the text you'll often see the phrase 'whatever comes, comes, whatever goes, goes'. The focus of the practice is not selectivity, but hospitality. This is a very good little marker that helps you see what you're up to in your practice. For example, say you're sitting down to practice and your mind feels very heavy and dull. You think: this is ridiculous! What am I doing? I'm not meditating. Then you get up, make a cup of tea, do something else. But, what you were having was dull meditation. What's the point of dull meditation? It's what you get. That's what arrived today. You can't go out and give the postman a 100 € and say 'only bring me good news'. The postman brings the letter with your name on it, whatever is inside. In the same way our mind shows whatever comes. What is important is the coming. The revealing. This is the clarity of the mind, the capacity to show. The fact that you install yourself like a nightclub bouncer to decide who should come in and who shouldn't come in, this is not helpful. The ego is upset by bad thoughts, awareness is not. So remember this! When we get into the practice and we get into making the patterns that we like, uh, I'm just doing ego time, not practice.

The Given

“It is beyond being something that can be indicated by saying – it is this. From the very beginning it has been perfectly pure and abides in great equanimity towards everything in samsara and nirvana.” He’s repeating what he said before: whatever comes, let it be. Because you have the field of arising, which is the space of the mind. Whatever arises can’t be grasped, the openness of the mind is not blocked. But into this, we insinuate our judgement. Which like a wedge seems to separate what is occurring and the one who is experiencing it. So self and the other become differentiated. This separation is not an established fact, it is the product of mental activity. The whole is the given, it’s there from the very beginning. Actually the fragmented, the divided arises due to turbulence created by mental activity.

Realising the ground frees us from the burden of self

So then he says: “those who realise this, have the ground or basis of buddhahood. Those who do not realise this, have the ground of sentient beings. Therefore it is called the ground of all, *kunzhi*. So the difference between buddhas and sentient beings is, that the buddha recognises that they are infinite, spacious mind, the ever shimmering field of clarity and this precise mode of manifestation - these three are inseparable. The buddha never forgets the ground, because the ground is the basis, the source. Everything begins with the ground. Whereas we sentient beings, we begin with ourselves. I’m here. This is me. This involves a forgetfulness of the ground, a forgetfulness of the field of clarity, in which self and other are arising together. Although this ground is open and empty, when we awaken to the presence of the ground, it doesn’t swallow us up like some great Leviathan coming out of the ocean. Rather, we are freed, freed from the burden of being ourselves. From the loneliness of being ourselves. Because now we belong to the integrated field of manifestation of clarity, which in the tantric system is represented as the mandala of all the buddhas. And we are inseparable from this ground, the open mind which is the mind of the buddha. So when we relax our grasping of holding ourselves together, our anxious attachment of how we think we are, we get more, not less. The more you give up, the more you get. It’s really strange. And the more you hang onto, the less you have.

II The Path

The basis for our identity, a conventional construction

So, that is the section on the ground, which gives a sense of what our mind is. Then there’s a section on the path. The practice that constitutes the Path is to understand falseness, so that confusion is liberated. Falseness means to be under the power of ignorance and misidentify what is going on. Now that Britain is sailing off into the Atlantic - freedom and joy! Many people like to say: now we have our country back! But what is one’s country? I am scottish, but I don’t want to live in Scotland. I live in England. Not that I particularly like England, but I like it more than Scotland. So what is my identity? Something DIY, cobbled together. What does it mean to be british? Nothing at all. Germany for the Germans. Well, people in North Germany are not always fond of people in South Germany. They have certain opinions about people in Bavaria. So, who are the real Germans? That could be the basis for a war. And in the past it has been.

Conventional constructions are unreliable

So how do you know what the real thing is? This is really difficult. When we start to question these assumptions or suppositions, which provide the basis for our identity, we find there’s not much substance there. They are conventional constructions. And therefore they’re unreliable. They’re not

arising through some true essence. Their essence is an agreement. Europe is an idea. Is the Ukraine in Europe? How far east do you want to go? Tadschikistan? Who would say where the end is? This is politics, this is decisions, this is lines on the map. On the historical map, Europe is expanding and contracting like a mad concertina. This is what falseness means. It means that we believe that these artificial, historically generated conventions are deeply and intrinsically true. This is how we lie to ourselves and cheat ourselves. I am british. It doesn't really mean anything at all. It just means you are entitled to a passport and can travel around a bit. But it has no clear indication of what I should be or how should I eat or how I should dress.

What would a real man do?

What occurs when we start to investigate the signs as the guarantor of our identity, we find that these are empty signifiers. I am a man. I don't know what that would mean. What should I do if I'm a man? I don't have any tatoos. Maybe I need some tatoos. Or a moustache. Should I have a straight moustache or one going up or one going down? What would a real man do? So we use these things, but they are hollow, they are balloons. You blow up a balloon. We blow up these concepts and signifiers, so that they appear strong and true and we move them around, but when we look at them the air comes out and the balloon becomes wrinkly.

The path of dzogchen consists in discovering falseness

So when he's talking about falseness, he's not meaning this as a moral fault. It doesn't mean we are bad people, but rather we are deluded. We rely on concepts to tell us the truth, but these concepts are incapable of doing that. So, this is what the path of dzogchen consists of: seeing how you cheat yourself through relying on concepts as telling the truth about how it is. Concepts are imaginable. They're concerned with 'as if'. And so we give ourselves to certain symbols and they seem to be very important. When I was a child we went to the cinema. At the end they always played the national anthem and everybody had to stand up. They don't do that now.

Bonding through the identification with symbols

The country is dying. And it dies because we don't have a symbolic identification. If a war came, who would be willing to die for Great Britain? In the WW I and WW II people died for their country. As a pacifist I don't believe that wars are very good. But clearly what it points to, is human beings bonding through the identification with symbols. And when the invested slogan like 'blood and soil' is raised, something is motivated in people. So that's what we have to observe. You can see it with the rise of right-wing political parties. People are looking for a deeper meaning, they want to find something to belong to.

The hollowness of the drum

But whether you believe that you are really german or european, doesn't make much difference, because the root problem is ontological confusion, a kind of existential ungroundedness. When we are not ourselves, vibrant, present and alive, that gap of alienation is filled up by these empty signifiers. So I can march through the streets, shout something. I am protesting. I am protestant. This is Martin Luther. I stand here and I say to you.... But it's the hollowness of the drum that let's it make a big noise. Emptiness is the gound of all this creativity. And all this human activity, busy

this, busy that, inside, outside, up, down, friend, enemy, it's just bubbles. No amount thinking will create a stable identity, because thoughts are impermanent.

But awareness which is unchanging and there from the very beginning, this is the real identity. This is where we can rest and be safe. This is our true home. And all the rest is just confusing self and others with empty signifiers. After a 15 min. break we'll have a little mediation practice.

Recognising the forgery by knowing the genuine

In the world of art collection there are many, many forgeries which arise. In order to tell what is a genuine work by, say Breughel, you need to have looked at a lot works that are agreed to be genuine. And you really get to know the kind of brushstroke, the pigmentation and so on, of each specific artist. On the basis of the genuine, you can see, uh, this is not genuine. So this is what he (Chetsangpa) was doing. He was setting out a description of the mind itself. These are the aspects that should be there when establishing what is your mind. Delusion is what we have, when we don't see the mind as it is.

Ngowo, Rangzhin, Thugje

Again he repeats slightly: "the natural condition or how the mind abides, is with three aspects: (and here they are translated as) nature, immediacy and energy". These technical terms are a little difficult to translate precisely. The first *ngowo* means how it is, empty. And the second, *rangzhin* is the quality of emptiness. The quality of emptiness is the display, the show. And the third, *thugje*, which generally means compassion, here means the movement of particular forms of energy within the fields of clarity.

The starting point as an individual

So in the break, most people got up and moved around a bit. You go out of the room and the passageway is a bit narrow and people were getting tea or looking at books and so you have to move through other people. So from inside myself I want to get to the toilet. The other people in the passageway are obstacles to my progress. That's the position of starting as an individual.

Belonging to the ever changing field of experience

Or we can start from being-hereness. Here we are together. We're already relating. So, as we move together through these narrow spaces, we are exhibiting different modes of relating. We pass someone and we can see that they're a little bit quiet, so we don't do anything. Then we see someone else who smiles and we have a few words and we continue. There we have the movement in a field of belonging. The field of belonging is reconstituting itself moment by moment. So how we move toward or away from each other has to be allowed from the meeting of the other. We show our availability through posture, gesture, speed of speech and so on. That is to say, the world is showing itself in pathways open through that world, which you cannot know by thinking about how it might be. But we find ourselves being constituted, not just out of ourselves, but co-emergently in relation to the interaction to the field. So, what we take as individuals, our nodal points of emergence, is the field that we're always already part of. And this is a field that cannot be secured. It's always moving. We've no idea when we end today what the traffic is like or if the train will

have a delay. We emerge into each situation with our attention and with concordance with the situation. This is made easier by allowing the world to be as it is. When the train is cancelled, we might feel 'how could they do this! This is a very unnecessary question. The answer is obvious. They do it very easily.

How can we stop infecting the world with our assumptions?

So, when we feel a bit of outrage – this should not happen! - we are alienating ourselves from the environment. All of these thoughts essentially say 'poor, wee me. Where's my mummy?' On one level, nobody, truly gives a fuck, but we're here, so what should we do? Go inside and go crazy? No, you stand in the trainstation, you see the people. You look at the children. It's very interesting. This is what is happening. But I don't want this. I want the other one. But you don't have that one. You have this one. There's no point in giving me this one. This is not what I want. I want the other one! Somehow I've ended up with the wrong kind of boyfriend. When I first met him, he had the nice label on the tin. It said 'good'. But there was just a little layer of chocolate on the top. Underneath, I don't know what it is. It doesn't taste good. What will I do? I got this thing that is not what I thought it was. This is the basis for a lot of mental turbulence. This is it. Now, when we say 'this is it', are we seeing what is here? As we've already seen, we have a strong tendency to project, interpret, to massage meanings we already have into the situation. So we are back with the phenomenological project of Husserl: how do you stop infecting the world with your assumptions, so that the world can show itself?

Half an hour is pure potential

Meditation is helpful. We start to become more familiar with the contents of our stream of consciousness. The more we can start to relax our thoughts when we are sitting in the praxis, the more we can apply that in the world. Accepting how it is is not a submission, it's not a defeat. It is actually the only basis for an effective mobilisation. So now I'm stuck in the train station. I thought I could get home, I'm cold, I have to wait half an hour. I have to wait half an hour! Amazing! Half an hour is pure potential. It's unknown territory. It could be anything. It could be a punishment or a blessing. How we participate in that half an hour will bring forward some features and push back other features. So, if we start with a heavy judgement – this shouldn't be happening, I'm cold, fuck the lot of them! - it's unlikely that we will find new interesting pathways into the use of that half hour. Compassion means connectivity. There are only two possibilities for connection. We either connect with the actual situation or we connect with our fantasies about them. So our actual condition is that from the beginning everything is always already connected through the inseparability of these three modalities. But due to delusion we split and rely on the projection of thoughts to make sense of the situation.

Just be cold when you're cold

So this basic state of the nature of the mind is empty and free of conceptual elaboration. It's immediacy or quality is clarity, effortlessly arising and it's energy unceasingly arises as diversity. Diversity here.... in a symbolic way someone might hold up a crystal, some light shines through it, so that you can see the refraction of the white light into the spectrum colours. This diversity is contained within the wholeness of the white light. So, it's a showing of the potential of the white light. So, in the same way as we encounter the movement of clarity we can be manifesting in many different ways. Essentially it means allowing ourselves to be as we are becoming. That is to say,

how can I be, how can I inhabit what I'm becoming? I'm on the platform in the station and I'm becoming cold. It's not the first time in your life you've been cold. You know what to do when you're cold. Shiver a little, wish you had your coat with you. You could be cold. You could fully be cold. I'm just cold. Does cold need any particular commentary? It's just cold. Half an hour of pure chill. Very difficult to do that, half an hour of cold, because we come into the commentary. I shouldn't be cold. Why do they lock the waiting room in the evening, this is when it gets cold. The mind goes back, the mind goes forward. We can't be here. But we're just cold. This is what it means. It's very simple. Be where you are as you are. And there is a vitality, a simplicity in that. And it's unpredictable.

For whatever reason we become fixated on a moment of self and other

“Although from the very beginning the mind itself abides in the presence of these perfect three modes (which are the modes of the buddha's mind, the dharmakaya, samboghakaya, nirmanakaya) it is instantaneously obscured by the adventitious impurity of the three forms of ignorance. Due to this, one's own nature is not known by oneself.” It's like being on a horse and losing your seat, so you fall off, or riding a bike and losing your balance and you collapse and fall into the ditch. They always say that when you fall off the horse, the first thing you've got to do, is get back on the horse. If you don't do that, you start to develop thoughts about the horse. And you don't ride a conceptual horse, you ride an actual horse.

So, it is the same with ignorance. This natural integration of all experience is already present, but for whatever reason we become fixated on a moment of self and other. So you have a kind of trauma reaction, which involves a retraction. And then you come to a conclusion. So you get a little puppy and you love your little puppy and then you find it's chewed the toe off your new ballet shoes. So you don't like the puppy anymore. It's a horrible puppy. I'm not going to ballet with this shoe. Everybody will laugh at me. So when you start to have this conceptual elaboration, you re-identify the object in a way that separates you from it. Subject and object start to drift apart, because the space is being filled by thoughts.

What is me is being discounted because I don't want it to be me

So, he describes this now in some detail. Firstly, there is co-emergent ignorance, by which one's innate recollection of, or presence in the natural condition of mind as the three modes, does not arise. This innate recollection is the natural clarity of just being oneself, being present. It doesn't involve any split. The split comes when we move into an opinion about it. So, to return to the example: you're in the railway station and first experience arises 'I'm cold'. This is a recognition of your embodiment in the current situation. I'm here. I'm cold. Oh, it's really cold. As the thoughts start to elaborate, you take up a position with regard to the coldness. I am cold, but now I'm suffering from coldness. I'm being attacked by coldness. This is too much. The cold is me. My condition is turned out and returned to me as other. Does that example make sense? Because it's very important. What is me is being discounted because I don't want it to be me. So this suddenly occurring ignorance is the self-positioning in terms of how one is. When something is, it doesn't need to be asserted. But this first stage of ignorance is the assertion 'that is how it is!'. And this very assertion creates a kind of tear because the experiential or the phenomenological moment is now being given a kind of epistemological wrapper, an interpretive wrapper.

So then he says: “ Due to this, there is stupidity, darkness, obscuration, fumbling and a profound lack of vision. In this state, the good qualities of the buddha are not known and also the rough faults of karma and the afflictions of sentient beings are not known.” Due to this, we abide with a very weak and uncertain knowledge. Nothing has happened with the ground nature, but it gives rise to

this moment of confusion. We don't sit with that confusion. As we start to emerge from it, we become active. All we had to do was relax, the moment of confusion would pass and everything would be as it is. But consciousness emerges from this dark, opaque confusion and starts to make sense of what is going on.

A consciousness on this side and the objects of consciousness on that side

Then he says: "Due to the arising of subtle habits of attachment, previously arisen ignorance and due to the unpredictable influence of the objects of the six senses, consciousness appears to be internal and unpredictable and then events and conditions are believed to be real." What's important to see, is, that this is not some kind of story like the book of genesis or so, this is an account that very accurately describes the kind of problems we face in meditation. Because in the first stage of ignorance, when there is this kind of fumbling, not knowing, it's not as if there is absolute nescience or absence of any mental activity. There is obscuring mental activity, a kind of stumbling in the dark. Not-knowing as simply-not-knowing, becomes not-knowing-as-persecution. And this becomes a mobilising arousal, in which, in the beginnings, you get the sense of a consciousness on this side and the objects of consciousness on that side. Consciousness is the standard way of translating this tibetan term *nampar shepa*. But it's not very useful, because *shepa* means to know and *nampar* means a kind of form, or that which offers a purchase, that something you can get a grip on. So, we're looking for shapes. And then starts the dynamic interaction between what is taken to be object, which is other, and subject, which is self, the subject on the side of consciousness, saying what things are.

Concepts are shapes that shape, feeders, the nurturing of consciousness.

And so, "with the events and conditions being taken as real, there is grasping at objects as good and as bad, followed by accepting and rejecting them and these objects seem to be real and so one abides with the three afflictions of stupidity, aversion and desire". There are real things and I either like them or don't like them. I want more or less of them. What are they? Our own mental confectionery. They are elaborated by the energy of the mind, but there's nothing there in itself. So, if we look out the window, we can see the tree. It's easy to see a tree. It's quite big. There is no tree! There is only tree and land. The tree has its roots in the ground, the land. If the land wasn't there, the tree would fall over and be dead. My intelligence in recognising that there is a tree, is the sign of my stupidity. This is really important to recognise.

The whole world is one integrated field of co-emergence. The tree depends on the soil, the soil depends on somebody not chopping it down, that depends on this being designated a garden and so on and on. So many link signifiers are inseparable from the continuing existence of the tree. So the moment or the event of being able to signify 'this is a tree', in terms of its own logic, is an act of intelligence. But the structure, which gives selective attention to the tree as if it were a thing existing in itself, extrapolating it from its vital, lived context, that is the affliction of stupidity. Tibetan is a very sweet language. The word for concept is *namtok*. And this *nam* is the same as in *namsche*, consciousness, again it means a concept or a shape. So concepts are shapes that shape. And they are the feeders, the nurturing of consciousness. This is a tree. The concept of tree seems to catch what is there and that catchability of what is there, feeds our confidence that I am conscious that there is a tree. Like Uroborus, this primordial snake that eats its own tail, the concepts and the consciousness make an unvirtuous circle, going around and around.

Shut up, I already know what it is

“Then for whatever arises as an appearance for the six senses, if it seems good, there is desire, if it seems not to be good, there is aversion. And if it seems neither good, nor not good, there is the stupidity of a dull absence of thought.” This dull absence of thought doesn't mean there is no thought at all, it means that you rest in an assumption, which is so habitual, that it doesn't raise any questions. So, why does James keep talking about the tree? It's just a tree. Come on! We've all seen a tree. Why talk about a tree? A tree is a tree is a tree, shut up! Let's talk about something else! This is the function of stupidity. It says I already know. It is what it is. And so the mind blocks itself from looking further. Look at this. It's a mental dullness, because it blocks investigation, curiosity.

Telling the world what it is

“In that way there is desire and aversion, accepting and rejecting, encouraging and inhibiting. This is called the ignorance of identification.” I am real and I have my interest and prejudices. The objects of the world are real and they have their varying qualities. And the interaction of these two generates this ignorance. The Tibetan name for this kind of ignorance is *kuntu tagpa*, which means the continuing application of signs to everything. Because everything is mediated through identification and interpretation. Through this we become the lords of the world. We walk around telling the world what it is. This is a house, this is a car, this is a dog. This is what parents do with little children. They give them a book and say ‘what is that?’ The child goes ‘wuff’. They say, yes, that's a dog. Double cheating, because it's only a picture, it's not a dog. The child at least knows that the dog should bark.

Trapped inside the prison of signs

But what the parents are saying is: if you have the name, you have the power. This is like the book of John: “In the beginning was the word.” The word was with god. The logos arises as the establishment of the world, which is the emergence of the godhead. We have the power of naming. But it's a tricky kind of power. This is the sort of power Dr. Faustus went for. Because it comes at a cost. You have mastery, but you are enslaved by your mastery. We live trapped inside the prison of signs. And the freshness of each moment becomes more and more distant from us, as we drown in the sea of signifiers.

The edifice that demonstrates and imprisons

From this emerges the third ignorance. So it says: “From the root of ignorance the six afflictions arise without control and so we are travellers wandering in the six realms of samsara and experiencing the sorrows of each of them. This is called the ignorance of not understanding cause and effect. This demonstrates the way the three forms of ignorance ripen into samsara. So, from a moment of confusion, leading to an anxious retraction, generating mental pattering (?), there manifests an active engagement of a seeming subject in a seeming world of objects. And as an individual we then move through the world, selecting, making our choices to have this and to not have that. We are asserting our intelligence and our embodied sense of our sensation and likes and dislikes. I want to live life on my terms. But when I do that, I'm the only that lives according to my terms, so I alienate myself from what's around me. Let's all go out and eat together. Vegans at that table, meat eaters at that table, fish eaters at that table, who like chili in the corner. It's very difficult in England to invite people to eat. People eat such individual things and they make it a mark of who they are. ‘I don't eat that’. Why the f*** not, it's good! What's wrong with you? Psst, you don't say that. I respect your integrity. I'm just me, that's just how I am. The understanding of karma says no, this is generated by decision after decision after decision. All these little mind moves start to build

up this edifice, which demonstrates you and imprisons you simultaneously. So in brief, samsara is our experience of being intoxicated by the belief that self and other are separate and both have their defining essence.

The function of meditation is to release this intoxication

So, we do a little meditation. The function of the meditation is to help us release this intoxication. What looked like medicine is in fact poison and what feels like poison is in fact medicine. I'm going to sit here and do nothing. Why? Not very interesting. Looks like poison to me. It's medicine. I think I'll just have to sit and think about something, because meditation is boring. It's better to think my own thoughts, I'm not troubling anyone. Feels like medicine, but it's actually poison. So, the practise is very simple. You sit in a comfortable way. The skeleton is holding our weight, so our muscles can relax. The eyes are open with a gaze into the near distance, about two arm spans in front. The chin is slightly raised. The mouth is slightly open, with the tongue on the upper palate. We relax into the outbreath and we are here. Whatever comes, comes, whether it seems to be sensation in the body or sounds from outside. As he describes very clearly, the basis of our mind is openness, so we relax into that openness and allow the flow of experience without correcting or grasping anything.

Relax the commentarial stance, let arising thought formations go free

This is a practise you can do again and again. It's very helpful and a basis for the main practise in dzogchen. Because through it, we can gradually have the sense of this natural purity of awareness. If you get caught in a thought or a sequence of thoughts, you don't have to push them away. Just slightly relax the tilt towards them, the interest in them and awareness is still there. The quality of awareness doesn't change. Whether good thoughts arise or bad thoughts arise, they don't contaminate what is thought-awareness. However, if you start thinking about your experience, reflecting on it or trying to learn from it, then you bind yourself into the multiplication of concepts and they very certainly carry a valency of good, bad, winning, losing and so on. And so, whenever you find yourself being caught up in the commentarial stance, generating that you need to make sense of what is going on, just relax on the outbreath, let that arising thought formation go free by itself and stay present with raw, fresh taste of whatever is arising. This is the central difference between samsara and nirvana and in the direction of nirvana the distinction between dzogchen and the other approaches.

Effortlessness is the key

In dzogchen the key thing is: don't make effort. Don't try harder. Simply relax, be present with, be open to whatever is occurring. If you're trying to improve your meditation it's a sign you've already entered into judgement about the meditation, which means you've alienated yourself from the practise of meditation. So do this practise for ten minutes, then take a little break, then go back into it. It's not about struggle. It's absolutely not heroic. It's just being with what is here. There is what is here-here and what is presently here. What is really here is our awareness and what is presently here is the flow of thoughts, feelings, sensations, dogs barking, people moving and so on. If you want to find refuge from the turbulence of samsara it lies in the natural purity of the mind. That's already there. It doesn't need your effort. But if you take refuge into your own effort to improve yourself, you'll find, that you'll fail. Because every effort that you make to improve your practise, will be met by some dissolution of that progress. Why is this? Because as the Buddha said:

all compounded things are impermanent. The realm of cause and effect, of construction, of creation, of elaboration creates patterns which are of their very nature transient.

You are not necessary for your own enlightenment

So again we are encountering something very paradoxical. You are not necessary for your own enlightenment. You are the number one obstacle for your own enlightenment. Doing less is more. Because it's already here. Awareness is pristine. It's pure and unchanged from the very beginning and it doesn't wear out. Like the mirror. Reflection upon reflection can arise, but the mirror doesn't get full of reflection. The mirror always has space. Because the mirror's very quality is its spacious hospitality. Sometimes our mind in this open awareness sometimes looks like active subject and some times it feels more like receptive object. These are just the various flavours of how manifestation occurs. It's not a problem to be solved.

We insert ourselves like a cuckoo in the nest

We think I don't know how to meditate. I'm just sitting here and nothing's different. Why should it be? If you want to imagine that you are a goddess or Padmasambhava or Chenresig you can do that. That will give you something to do. And then you can get a report card at the end of the year. I've done so many mantras. I've done so many prostrations. Good, very good. You have done all of that. You are good. Very good. And where is your mind? Who was doing the prostrations? I'm doing the prostrations. I am very tired, but I'm going to do more prostrations. The only one who has ever done any prostration is the mind itself. How does it do prostrations? By sitting here very still, not moving, prostrations arise in the manner of a dream. This is the union of pristine or primordial purity and the effortlessly arising clarity. How are we going to find their inseparability if we insert ourselves like a cuckoo in the nest? But if I don't do it, it won't get better. I have to do it. This is the road to confusion. You don't have to do it.

Learn to be useless

What you have to do, is to learn to not do it. Learn to be useless. This is very strange. How could it be better to be useless than to be useful. There's a great yogi, Chatral Rinpoche. His name means 'work finished' or 'free of activity'. I was lucky enough to spend some time with him, many years ago. He sat at the front in a room in this small monastery in Bangalore, Darjeeling. And he just sat there all day. People would come, maybe talk with him a little bit. Then he would look very bored and the person thought 'uh, better go'. He was just sitting there. What should he do? It's very interesting. What is so important to do? Because if the teaching is correct, all that we need is already here.

Burying the diamond while trying to uncover it

If the teaching is correct, what covers up what is already here, is our activity of trying to uncover what is already here. You know that there is a diamond in the ground. So you start to dig a hole. You dig down and down and down. You put the shovel in the ground, you dig the earth up. At the end of the day you're very tired, you didn't find the diamond. Why not? Because the diamond was under the place where you were piling up all the new earth. This is what we do. It's a very subtle kind of practise because we have to observe our own falseness. I have to do it. I need to develop my mind so I have pure thoughts to help other beings and not have these selfish thoughts.

The problem of mixing up different styles of practise

But generally with the different styles of practises they have the view, the meditation, the activity and the result. Replacing bad thoughts with good thoughts belongs to the basic Mahayana position. And to the two previous yantras of practise. It doesn't belong to dzogchen. If you take a bit of dharma from here and a bit of dharma from there, it's nothing at all. It's your own construction.

The three wheels that drive the continuity of samsara

So, I'm sitting in the practise and I just have all these troubling thoughts. I feel it would be better to have good thoughts than bad thoughts. Who feels that? I feel that. Who is this I? This is the ego wandering about. The problem with the ego is, that it's prone to make bad choices. That's why we're wandering in samsara. The primordial buddha Kuntuzangpo said: relax into the ground which is there from the very beginning. We think 'good idea'. But before I do that, I'll just tidy things up a bit. Because imagine if I relax and open and I become enlightened and all the buddhas come to meet me and they see 'ugh, all these dirty thoughts! You're not really a buddha, are you? So it's always good to do a bit of spring cleaning. And you don't need to wait for the spring. You can do it every month and every day. I'm going to improve my mind. So now the three wheels are turning. My mind, myself as the cleaner of my mind and the activity of cleaning. These are the three factors which drive the continuity of samsara.

Relax. It's ok.

So the central point is: practise according to the view. Trust that the impermanent nature of all phenomena means, that the mind effortlessly cleans itself. This is the self-liberation of all phenomena. If things are self-liberating, you don't need to liberate them. That's pretty obvious. So, trying to liberate things, which are by themselves self-liberated, binds you to the things, so that they are not able to self-liberate. I always like to rinse the dishes well before I put them in the dishwasher. You can't be too careful! Dzogchen says 'relax, trust. It's ok'. And on that happy note, we can move out onto Saturday night in Berlin. And we meet tomorrow at ten.

Re-unification

I hear that this is a very auspicious day, the German re-unification day. Tomorrow? Well, we're prepared today. All our life is a preparation for re-unification. Things can only be re-unified if basically they have remained a unity, though seemingly divided due to the arising of causes and circumstances. From what I can gather, in the intense periods the two parts of Germany were in a kind of rivalry that involved differentiation. We are not like you. The differentiation is intensified by the denial of similarities. This is very similar to what we were looking at yesterday, that ignorance involves not seeing how things actually are. There is the integrity of our experience, but when we privilege one part and ignore the other part, it is as if there is a tear or separation.

Differentiation without division

So when we do this open sitting practise, this is re-unification. We do it with our eyes open, with our senses open. We're not in retreat. We're not going into a special mediation space. As we sit, we have experiences arising. Some seem to be outside, some seem to be inside in our body, thoughts, feelings and so on. But by remaining relaxed and open we see: oh, these are different kinds of experience. And we can see what we have here is differentiation without division. It's not as though

there is only one thing. The diversity of experience that arises when it's held in its natural sphere, which is the open emptiness of awareness, then everything has its place. Then it is where it is. And it is no other. And doesn't need to be other. But when we lose touch with that spaciousness then we try to organise the appearances which arise into categories, in order to simplify our apprehension. And that's the function of this splitting in self and other, inside and outside, good, bad and so on. So by doing nothing, by relaxing our activity into the space in which it moves, re-unification is present automatically.

Open for play

This is the middle way. Neither a homogenisation, nor many different things. Which is why in Mahamudra texts they talk of 'one taste'. This is the taste of emptiness. This is a very light taste. Because when we see that all appearance is inseparable from emptiness and that there is no fundamental or intrinsic division between all the different phenomena, then we see that there is no internal definition which is keeping them apart and so the world is open for play. We like different things. The play of the mind. You can have your own, very specific take on the world and this is simply the interplay between subject and object, which are not in themselves separate things. Which is why, in the practise of dzogchen, we are not so concerned to constrain behaviour.

When we invest in an agenda, it narrows the scope

We live our lives in different ways. How should we live? What's the right way to live? Who knows? Everybody knows. If you ask people, they'll tell you. It's always dangerous to ask people for advice. It's open. You can do what you like. But surely we need some sort of constraint?! If we didn't control ourselves, wouldn't our impulses lead us astray? But what is an impulse? It is a decontextualised tendency. When the subject is in the world, connected with the world, the world provides modification to the individual. You don't need to have a rule book in your head. If you see other people's faces, they will show you how you're getting on. We are part of a living interactive system. And if we go seemingly in one direction, the re-balancing will be offered by the world, if we stay in connection.

If we have, developing in meditation, the capacity to be equally aware of my situation and your situation, then in this shared field the various factors move together and find their balance. But if I start from inside myself, privileging the information, which appears to be mine, sensation, proprioception and so on, then I move towards the world with an agenda. And when we invest in an agenda, it narrows the scope for negotiation.

Don't take up a position in relation to thoughts

Co-emergence, the arising of all the factors of the field at once, provides us with the liberation of this isolating bubble of 'me first'. It's not about being hyper altruistic – you first. That is just the other side of the dualistic move. But we. Inclusion, which means being attentive to the nuances of what is occurring. So, the self-liberation of all phenomena arises in this integrated sphere. Because what is dissolving, again and again, is the fulcrum point where we could see separate entities. What is liberating, what is dissolving is the tension around a fulcrum point, where you could tilt toward seeing there being individual entities, or, in the other direction, staying with the openness. This is why, when we do the meditation and are just sitting, if we find ourselves being caught up in a chain of thoughts, the key thing is, don't take up a position in relation to that. Not judging it as bad, not thinking you have to try harder, but just stay closer to what is occurring. Being present with it in the way the mirror is present with the reflection. And as the thought dissolves, the openness is there.

And then another thought comes. It comes in the openness.

Our individual self is a series of thoughts

How big is this openness? Open, open, open. It's infinitely open. If it's infinite, it cannot have a boundary. There is no other. If there is no outside, how will it occur, that we are invaded by these thoughts? Where do they come from? We want to meditate, but we find ourselves disturbed by thoughts. We didn't ask for these thoughts, but here they come. We can feel persecuted by them. But the mind is infinite. The thoughts are the way that the mind shows itself, like wispy clouds appearing out of the blue in the sky and dissolving back in again. So there's no need to remove the thought. When we enter into judgement about the thought, this is simply a thought commenting on another thought.

Our individual self is a series of thoughts. That's what we are: the flow or a series of thoughts, that comment on something. One transient move, commenting on another transient move, which has already vanished. I hated my school. This can be said with an intensity of feeling that reverberates through it and establishes something important. So then someone might say 'oh James I hadn't realised it was that bad'. They offer a chain of words. 'Yeah, it was hard'.

Ignorance is our capacity to identify with what we take to be ourselves

So this is the weaving of life. Like with a loom you have these parts: the warp and the weft. And in a conversation you have the movement of the vertical and horizontal threads. It is a construction. This is constructing a momentary pattern of clouds. This does not disturb the unity because the clouds are inseparable from the sky, just as thoughts are inseparable from the mind. But ignorance is our capacity to identify into the thoughts and have the felt sense of 'this is who I am'. This is a quality of energy, a vibration that we have become accustomed to and that we take to be ourselves.

A phenomenological description of I as emptiness

But in the course of the day, we say so many things about ourselves: I'm in a hurry, I'm thirsty, I'm tired.... And each of these seems true. The I is able to show all these propositions because it is empty. The I fills itself and has the fullness of thoughts, which then dissolves. The I is filled with forms of emptiness and I is a form of emptiness. This is not a theory, it is a phenomenological description. Sit with your own practise and you just sit with your life, your own experience and see how it is. Don't tell your experience what it is, but allow it to show you what it is. In this way we see the dynamic movement of everything that we have and everything that we are. This is a quality of energy, of movement. It's ungraspable. Moving, moving, moving, like a current moving in a stream. Nothing is established.

Intolerable experience

If somebody thinks 'I hate myself', he might decide 'I'm going to kill myself, I can't bear myself any longer'. It's certainly possible to commit suicide. Many people do it every year. 'This is intolerable!'. What is it that's intolerable? Experiences. That life is not the way that I want it to be. I feel hopeless. What is hopelessness? We've probably all felt hopeless from time to time. It's a mood. A mood is like morning mist. Pervasive, but without any substance. But when we dissolve into that mood of sadness or depression or hopelessness, the mist-like shapelessness seems to

extend forever. It's difficult to manage. We can usually manage our anger, because anger seems to have more of a shape. But moods of alienation, anomy, dissolving my sense of who I am is more difficult. If you sit talking with someone extremely depressed, it's very difficult to find them. Nothing we say seems to touch or reach them. The depression just dissolves any secure or reassuring shapes that are nearby.

Learning to trust space

This is an experience we also can have in meditation. If you relax and open, sometimes people feel as though they're dissolving away. I don't know who I am anymore. My familiar reference points are losing their sense of security they had previously offered to me. I'm all at sea. If you're right out on the ocean, you lose sight of the coast. How will you get your bearings? From the point of view of dzogchen, the only reasonable refuge in that situation is space. But normally we cling to our fantasy of substance. When the moving elements of fire, air, water and wind are turning, turning and turning and our life is becoming shapeless, then we seek the element earth, something secure, something to rely on. The problem with the earth element is, you have to keep re-building it. It offers the fantasy of stability. But all we can construct is just sandcastles next to the waves. The ego seeks earth. I am, I exist, there's something definite about me. But it's actually hollow. Our basic nature is space. Space is ungraspable and yet ever-present. And so, the re-unification of ourselves involves learning to trust space.

Continuing life without over-investing

Space element is not going to knock out earth. It's not about getting spaced-out. Life can continue in a very precise way. We do the many things that are required of us. But this is movement in space and we are the movement and the space. So whatever problems arise for us, outer problems, inner problems, before we expend a lot of energy trying to sort the problem, just relax and see where is the problem located. It's already in space. Things have to be done. But we do them without excessive investment. Anything can be over-invested. Religious life can be over-invested. Love of a football team can be over-invested. And then it's very difficult to re-balance.

Our culture privileges conflict more than collaboration

Football is based on winning. Winning and losing, self against other. This disturbance is everywhere in the world. Our culture privileges conflict much more than collaboration and yet we're all in the field of experience. So whenever we feel anxious, persecuted or overwhelmed and we want to sort it out, change ourselves or change other people, we should relax on the outbreath and allow the presenting problem to be where it always is, in space. This allows us to see its proper proportions, its proper intensity.

Some of you may know this wonderful film trilogy on Ivan the Terrible by Eisenstein. As he becomes more paranoid (the photography is fantastic), he's walking down the pathways of his palace. The shadows are getting longer and longer and longer. He's now kind of haunted by the shadows of his own image. He spent a lot of time misinterpreting what was happening around him, as if it was all intentional attack from others. He is reading what is there, rather than seeing what is there, not allowing the world to show itself. So, relaxing and opening and allowing whatever is arising to show itself as it is.... when it seems attractive and we want more, or when it seems unattractive and we want less.

What is a thought when you don't tell it what it is?

The feeling tone of attraction or aversion - is this in response to an intrinsic quality in the thought? Or is it a transaction, an interpretation of what's there? I don't like this, I shouldn't have thoughts like that. What is the thought? Something arising and passing. This is its actuality. It carries a meaning. Or rather, it carries a pattern which is open to interpretation. You then make your interpretation. Your interpretation is not intrinsic to the object. So in our practise we're trying to relax our tendency to make sense of things, to allocate meaning towards what is arising. And just allow the thought to just be a thought. What is a thought when you don't tell it what it is?

We exist as eternal commentary

Most of us have no idea what this means? Because we exist as this eternal commentary. Relax the effort. It is what it is, arising, passing, coming, going. But what will I hold on to? What do you need to hold on to? Like small children, they get a bit frightened of going into the sea. I'm going to drown, help me!' Half an hour later, they're splashing around. Because now they've allowed themselves to make friends with the water. At first, their fear was telling the water what it was... (it's dangerous argh!) And then you realise you can be at one with the water and move in it. And then it's very difficult to get them out of the water, when it's time to go home (-no, just another time!) So, this is where we are. We stand at the edge of the beach, looking at emptiness. Not quite sure. We've heard that this is where all the buddhas come to have a bath, but we're not quite sure, so we stand at the beach thinking about what the water might be like. So, now we're going to enter the paddling pool together. It's not so deep.

Mistaking emptiness as lack

One of the great songs from the 1960's has the line "my world is empty without you babe" This is a song that we sing all the time. Except we sing: "myself is empty without you, thought" This is why we merge with thoughts. Because our self is empty. So the first stage of ignorance that we were looking at yesterday is the confusion about what emptiness is. When emptiness is experienced as lack, we have the sense that something is missing. So we go again and again and again looking for something to fill the lack. And so we have our commentary for the day: 'I'm thirsty, I'm tired, I want to go for a walk' in which this empty signifier 'I' fills itself with this current proposition. So this is arising from mistaking emptiness as lack. Emptiness is actually the ground from which and in which all the factors arise, that are taken out by the self, being things with which it can fuse and find fullness. It is because I'm empty, that I can have everything. We have all these experiences. If we were something definite and defined, there would be so many things impossible to us.

There isn't a template determining what you should be like

We are particularly lucky to be alive at this time. From what I hear if you had been alive a couple of hundred years ago in a traditional Prussian family, you would not have so much freedom. There was a lot more choreography of social behaviour. But here we have the freedom to move around and experience all kinds of things. Because this super-egoic and judgemental voice is muted at this time. So, everything is available. Because we're empty! When societies tighten up and have a lot of role definition, say for gender, women must behave in this way and this way, then the girl child is being filled with society's notion of what it means to be a girl. One of the things that has come about with the waves of feminism is the impossibility of men telling women what they are. Some men may try,

but they're not going to be very successful. Women today can find out what it means to be them. You can be a woman in your way. What would that mean? Well, you have to find out, because it's not already decided. There isn't a template or a programme determining what that would be like.

How could I possibly know how I'll be tomorrow?

You take yourself out into life and you find sometimes you go this way, sometimes you got that way. All of this is possible for me because I am not pre-determined, pre-defined. My richness is my emptiness. It's amazing. And the more constrained we are, be it through societal domination or our neurotic structure, the more we lose that freedom. Because when we offer ourselves into the flow of life, we find that *today* I am like this. I was not like this yesterday and I don't know how I will be tomorrow. In a strict patriarchal culture you can't say this. You have to take your place in social structure. But we are unreliable. And this is delicious. Why would you want to be reliable? Buddha says all things arise due to causes, in co-dependent origination. I am a nodal point in an energetic field, suffused by vectors beyond count. How could I possibly know how I'll be tomorrow? I don't know how I'll be in five minutes time. I *find* myself saying this. I arrive here, I don't have a script of what I'm going to say. But I look around and I see your lovely faces and I find myself burbling away. This is our life. We find ourselves doing something. Our self comes after the fact of our existence. Our existence precedes our sense of what we're up to. This is not a sign that we're out of control. It's a sign that the ego's attempt to center itself for mastery and control is an illusion. Life happens through us, as us. And we're very present in our lives as our life, we're here on the point moment by moment. But what should I do? Who would you ask? Who can tell you how to live? There are many, many different ideas. When you get a lot of rules and imposition of tight roles this is the dominance of the earth element as a means to control the dynamic of fire, water and air. But when earth dissolves there is the freedom to allow patterning to move.

Connectivity and collaboration

I don't know how I will be. I don't know what will happen to me. This could be freedom or terror. This is why trust is very important. That it will be ok. It's not all up to me. Like a child learning to swim, you have to learn to observe the waves. They're moving today at the speed of the wind, so when you open your mouth to take some air, make sure the water is not above your mouth. You can't just swim from the inside out. You're swimming in the sea, with the sea. The sea is neutral. It's neither friend nor enemy. But if you treat it as a friend, it will be friendly. And if you try to dominate it, you'll get a big splash. So, not-knowing is the invitation to attend. Because very often when we know, we assume and then we don't look. Both wisdom and compassion have to do with connectivity. Being present in our actuality as it is and collaborating with whatever is occurring.

The thought is empty. This is clarity.

So, now we're going into the way of liberation."From beginningless time, the ground has been naturally pure as nature, immediacy and energy, three modes, effortlessly arising." This is the openness and the clarity and the precise movement which is our actuality. "Accordingly by understanding one's own nature, the clarity of self-recollection rises like the sun and dispels the darkness of co-emergent ignorance." So this is just what we were looking at. You relax into the openness and then you have the clarity of seeing of what is the actual situation of what is occurring. The thought is empty. This is clarity. The tree is empty, the house is empty, I am empty. And with this we have the self-recollection of emptiness as the ground, rather than emptiness as lack. Oh, it's open, thank you. There's nothing here. This is like the sun. It radiates its light in all directions. It's

unobstructed clarity. Whatever is occurring are the shimmering, empty forms of the clarity of my own mind. And so the first level of ignorance which was to ignore its own nature, dissolves.

The ignorance of identification

“By recognising the ceaseless, multifarious display of the innate energy of awareness, appearance is self-arising and self-liberating and this dispells the ignorance of self-identification”. So, with the ignorance of identification, we say `this is a watch`. And this carries with it the sense that the watchness of the watch is in the watch. Now when you recognise: I`m saying `this is a watch`. The watchness of the watch is my mind. This is the movement of my mind which generates the experience of the watch. I`m not an isolated thing in a world of things. But I am the shimmering intelligence or flow of energy which is a player or a collaborator, the ceaseless flow of the emergence of patternings including what we call a watch. Staying with the experience that everything is the self-arising and self-dissolving display of your own mind, that second form of ignorance dissolves.

It`s not necessary to enact it

Then he says: “Because the ignorance of identification has been purified, the root of the lifesource of bad actions has been cut and so the ignorance of not understanding cause and effect is self-purified.” So, if you think of your own life, of some time when you`ve done something that you might now regret. Why did I do that? Because there was an I to do it. An I that was acting on the world, a world separate from the I. And I is intentionally choosing selective attention. I know you`re in a relation with that person, but I`m going to try to get you into bed with me. Because I really like you, I like you, I like you.....You and me forget everything else. So this is what happens, there is a decontextualising of the situation.

Whether it`s stealing or exploiting, bad karma arises when making one element the total figure and receding everything else into the background. So, what he`s saying is, that when you recognise that it is your mind at work, your mind tells you this person is so special. That`s an idea. Feels very real, but, it`s an idea. What will happen if I indulge this idea? A moment of pleasure and then distress for three people. It`s not necessary to enact it.

It doesn`t mean that you have to have a completely bland, vanilla mind. But it`s the enactment that creates the pain and suffering.

No huge transformation to undergo

Then he says:” Moreover, those who understand their own falseness are known as buddhas and those who do not, are known as sentient beings. The root of our falseness, as we have seen, is to mis-identify emptiness as lack and to then focus on specific features of the world as the antidote to that. And then he says:”But these are just conventional terms, for there is not a hair`s breadth of difference between the natural condition of buddhas and sentient beings. They are separated by either understanding or not understanding this.” So no huge transformation has to go in the process of going from sentient being into buddha. It`s about seeing your own mind. Seeing the emptiness of your own ground.

The solidification, which becomes the stupidity of our assumptions

Then he says:” in the middle of samsara and nirvana there is just the letter A, which is the symbol of

emptiness. This is the actual truth.” So, this is very profound. Emptiness liberates us from the fantasy of lack, because lack is filled with the three poisons. First we have the solidification, which becomes the stupidity of our assumptions. And then we have this movement from our self-position into the world, dividing things into what we like, leading to desire, and things we don't like, leading to aversion. And if you're interested in history, sociology, politics, economics, you can take this understanding into these areas and it will illuminate everything.

Why the Bodhisattva turn is so important

In Canada now there is a whole new inquiry into the exploitation of the early indigenous population, the native peoples. Same in Australia. The government which allowed the exploitation of children, taking them away from their parents, putting them in orphanages, was based on all kinds of thoughts of who these people are and their needs. It's better for the child to be in an orphanage than to be with the parents, because the father is sniffing petrol all day. So, why is the father sniffing petroleum all day? Because he's living on a reservation with no good work to do and he's got no education and he's lost his entitlement to hunt in his traditional area.

Ignorance allows people to act out the most exploitative and reductive fantasies onto other people

By ignoring the causal chain of events that leads to this situation, you can put a little circle around the man – inadequate father, dangerous man, we take the child into the orphanage. Because the legal entitlement, coming from the central government office, which allows the child to be removed from the family, is in the lineage of the governments' illegal action in stealing the land from the tribal people. But in order for the government to act with a felt sense of legitimacy, they have to forget their own history. And that then leads to this reification, that this is a drunken father. That's all he is. He is like this, because his essential nature is substandard. We see these stories all over the world. Which is why the Bodhisattva turn - the liberation of all beings - is so important. If ignorance just made people sit and rock their heads all day, it wouldn't be so bad. But ignorance allows people to act out the most exploitative and reductive fantasies onto other people. So if you want to help other sentient beings, the first thing we have to do is to examine our own falseness. How we delude ourselves, what bizarre assumptions we build our life on, and release them into the openness of the buddha mind. Okay, so we take a break for 20 minutes now.

The two stages of the introduction

So, then he says: “There are three aspects to protecting the awareness of the self- understanding of one's own falseness: view, meditation and the activity. And it's very interesting the way this is formulated. It's not talking in a proactive way about awakening or gaining enlightenment. All you have to do is see how you cheat and delude yourself and all will be clear. “The view means a clear, definite confidence in one's present recognition of one's natural condition free of the stain of ignorance. This is the three modes effortlessly arising. This is related to the three statements of Garab Dorje. The first is to directly open to your own mind. In Tibetan this is called *ngo trowa* (?), which means to face or to point out. But of course it's not pointing toward an object. It's pointing out the nature of our mind, which is not an object, which we will never get or attain, but we can settle into. So, having the understanding presented in a way that our mind can think about, we then use that to not get lost in the meditation practice. And so that's the two stages of the introduction, if you like. First you get the instructions, or the way of looking, that we've been covering and we use that to get the confidence to let go of our self-protective tightness. And then we can relax into

the clarity that this is how it is. Again, the central point is: if you make something, you will know how it is made. And therefore it will carry this flavour of artificiality. So, the mind itself is without any artificiality, it's not a construct. The revealing is not achieved by doing. So this is how the view moves into the meditation.

Selectivity unsteadies the mind

Then it says: "the maintenance of this view is known as meditation. Connected with this is the teaching of the method for keeping the mind steady. To begin with stop the activities of your body, voice and mind."

When I was translating this text with C.R.Lama, I always tried to do it as close as possible to the Tibetan. And you see that the Tibetans also have this problem with grammar, because it gets formulated as 'you have to keep your mind steady'. But that's an activity and you're not to be active. So, essentially what it is saying is, don't engage in the activity which will unsteady your mind. But it's quite difficult to speak always in the language of negation, so we slip into saying this is what you have to do. But the way that we steady our mind is by stopping unsteading our mind. You unsteady your mind by selectivity. This is good and I want more, this is bad and I want less. These are movements. It is the reactivity, the position-taking and then the judgement, then the mobilising reaction that move mental phenomena and outer phenomena which makes the mind seem unsteady. Because there are these three aspects. There's the openness, the empty openness of the mind, it's clarity which is the moving field of experience and our precise movement inside it. The first aspect never moves, never changes. Clarity is just what it is as it arises. It's the third element of participation which generates the feeling of 'me doing this'. The movement is within the mind and it moves nothing. When the patterns move and shift around they are empty patterns.

Forever trying to change situations

And when we see this, there is no need to stop bad thoughts. There's no need to get rid of uncomfortable feelings. 'I don't like this'-- doesn't mean anything. 'I don't like it!' Normally that leads into 'well, I better change it. Something should be done. But why? Because I just don't like it. Something is happening which is uncomfortable. This means you're uncomfortable. And? After a while, you'll be comfortable. Then you'll be uncomfortable. Then you'll need a pee, then you need a drink. All of these experiences are both full and empty. So, in the meditation you can see yourself, that when you take yourself seriously, movement occurs. And when you relax a little and you see everything as illusion, you don't need so much. It's like this.

How should it be? You've already displaced yourself from where you are by imagining some other situation that would be better. The problem is not that maybe you feel dull and unable to meditate. The problem is that you find it difficult to allow yourself to feel dull and unable to meditate. >But what's the point of sitting here when I'm not doing anything and nothing is clear?< What's wrong with this? >It shouldn't be like this!< But it is like this. This is how it is. >But I don't like how it is.< Then you will be forever trying to change situations to give you the situation that you want.

In the land of gold, everything is gold

Okay, you can be queen for the day. You can have what you want. So, what do you want? >I don't know.< That's the problem. The mind is moving. We're not happy with the object, but then the subject shifts anyway. So staying open with the mind as it is. So what we have to renounce is our script or our rule book that tells us how to evaluate what's going on. If you go the land of gold, everything is gold. If you got to the land of illusion, everything is illusion. Ah, but some illusions

are better than others. Some clouds in the sky are much nicer than other ones. This is how we can observe our own falseness or self-deception. What we're enacting is dissatisfaction. That's never quite right. That some adjustment has to be made. Because if it's okay, then the ego becomes redundant. You don't need to get in and make all your prissy little adjustments. Because it's okay. So, we just sit and relax and it's okay.

Why this approach is so radical

>But dad, I'm bored. Are we there yet? Am I enlightened? Is this it? Hmmm, we've been in the car for an hour. Where is the enlightenment anyway?< This is our life. >Just read a book, or look out of the window. We've never been here before. Look at the scenery.< > It's boring!< It's quite difficult for children to be passive. Because they're highly participatory. They like to get involved with things. So, this is the issue in meditation: relaxing and going through the reading that boredom, dissatisfaction and disappointment should be changed. And that's the reason why this approach is so radical. Because it says: whatever comes, comes. Weird states arise – okay. But also, whatever goes, goes. Also very happy, blissful states vanish. Allowing the mind to be as it is, means the ego is entitled to become its own size. The ego is always a DIY construction. We cobble ourselves together.

Why faith and devotion is so important

We're like a child in a family with drunk parents. The child has to get up by themselves, make their own breakfast, get to school on time. Come home, no food in the fridge, find where mom hides her ten euro note for food, take that, go to the shops. This develops the feeling, it's all up to me. Nobody's looking out for me.

And in my work in therapy I had many patients who had this kind of background. And they find it very difficult to trust the therapist. The idea that someone is on their side, that someone will be genuinely concerned about them, will speak to them in terms of their benefit, is very unusual. And of course, as we've touched on before, if I relax my self-reliance and open up a little bit, I'm now more exposed to the vagaries of these experiences, because other people may not be kind. So we often find that we carry a basic distrust. That's why the texts say faith and devotion is so important. The ability to say 'I open to you'.

The radiance of the indestructible openness

One aspect of this is the understanding of the nature of the mind, that we've been looking at. And being clear about what aspects of ourself are vulnerable. Vulnerable: the word means 'being able to be hurt'. Or to hurt. The basic nature of our mind is described as vajra – unable to be hurt. The basic field of experience arises as it is and we can already start to wish that it was different, but it's on the level of our participation that we feel more liable to be hurt. Now in order to re-integrate or to awaken to our natural integration, the key thing we need, is to settle into the openness of the mind. What stops us doing that, is the fear that we won't be protected. So we kind of live along this spectrum: we hear the teaching and it says that one part of us is indestructible and the other movement. Because it's movement, it's going to change. And some of these movements generate a flavour of happy or sad. This is the radiance of the indestructible openness. But when we forget that openness, the hopes and fears, the liking and not liking become intensely real.

When sick, you're sick and when dying, you're dying

That's why these texts say: when sick, you're sick and when dying, you're dying. This can sound like madness.

>If I'm sick, why wouldn't I go to the doctor?< Because you want to be sick. >Nobody wants to be sick!< That's because most people don't know how to be sick. You can be sick in a histrionic manner. >I'm having one of my terrible headaches!< Or you can deny that you're sick and push through. Or you can be sick. You sit with your body and you feel what is this: backpain, headache, pain, cold, nerve being disturbed by a cancer growth, whatever it is. This is your life. It's not that we shouldn't get help. But you can at least spend a little more time with the experience of sickness. Rather than seeing it as an unwelcome intrusion that should be removed. We can be with that, then we know what sick is. Then we know what hunger is, what cold is, what toothache is. Oh, this is what it is. Then if necessary you can make some intervention. The way we have the clarity do this is through the meditation. We sit with whatever arises.

Connecting with the guru through praying

So what we're having to do is a re-framing. Intervention, which seems to be helpful, we're re-framing as being unhelpful. So "To begin with, stop the activities of body, voice and mind." Sitting quietly and observing. Then it says: "Pray to your guru, who has all the necessary qualities." Merge your mind with hers and in that state do not pursue past ideas." Now there are many kinds of prayers translated in the Tibetan tradition. You can find them. Many of them are translated in the Khordong tradition and the Khordong group in Berlin meet and do some practices with these prayers in them. The function of the praying is to make the connection, so we can open ourselves. So that we can feel, that we're getting close enough to merging our mind into the gurus and then we can rest in that open state.

Don't get involved in artificial activities of improving

"Do not pursue past ideas. Do not wait for future ideas. Keep or rest in your present ideas, free of all artifice, letting it flow freely in its own fashion. Don't modify it with good thoughts. Do not mix it with bad thoughts. However it presents itself, do not modify it in any way." We'll just do the next paragraph and then we'll do some practise. So then he says "Keep your mind clear, happy, brilliant, naked, bright, tranquil and relaxed." You have to understand what this means. It doesn't mean keep your bedroom tidy. It means that the mind is like this already. So we keep it like this by not doing anything else. By not getting involved in artificial activities of improving. "Keep this open ground nature as void happiness, the immediacy of emergence as clear happiness and let energy be unimpeded."

Object and you're lost in identification with thought

What 'let energy be unimpeded' means, is, let the world and the mind be however it is. For example you might decide to do some practise in the evening. You put aside a time. You've got other things to do, so you've just got this time. You sit down to do the practise. And the neighbours in the next flat start to play very loud music. This is part of your practise. Once you start objecting to it and start to think they're spoiling it, then you're lost in identification with thought. It IS like this. It is a wonderful opportunity. You're sitting open and there is a lot of noise. Now you can really be with noise. You don't merge into it and sing along with the song. Don't take up a negative position about it. The song fills the space of the mind and then it stops. And the something else comes. Everything is our mind. Sometimes our mind looks like motorcars, like houses, like birds, like apples and

sometimes it looks like thoughts. This is the energy of the mind and it is empty and it comes from emptiness. >No, it doesn't! It comes from the f***ing neighbours.<

This mad, crazy, angry mind is the mind of all the buddhas

So, where does this judgement about our neighbours come from? This is the radiance of the dharmakaya. So, even if you go into a rant in your head about these neighbours. The radiance is showing this form. This mad, crazy, angry mind is the mind of all the buddhas. >Really? Can this be true?< Where else does it come from?>Well, I was brought up to be respectful of other people. I have certain standards and principles, but these people, they're not like me.< So this is the line of samsara. Thought riding on thought, riding on thought, building up positions, so you can make your judgement. So it's as if there is a horizontal line of the progression of thoughts through time, which allows you to build on your memories and so on, but there is also, if you like, the vertical line of the immediate manifestation. What I'm hearing is noise. What I'm thinking is neighbours. But the noise is noise. I only know the neighbours are making the noise because I'm thinking 'where did the noise come from?', Sound just comes. Sound is sound. Sound itself doesn't have a label. We put the label on it. And then on the basis of that, we build up our irritation and annoyance.

So when the text says "whatever comes, comes", we tend to what comes. When it says "don't enter into artificiality" that means don't elaborate into this story 'it's the neighbours, we call the police, and why does nobody else complain?'. Because if you just stay with the sound as sound, your mind will relax more, and you will become more bright and clear and you will be more happy.

The meditation with the white letter Ah

"Without any set object of meditation, remain without wavering for even an instant." So there are many different kinds of meditation. In most meditation practices, before you sit down, you know what you're going to do. I'm going to visualise something, or I'm going to observe my breath, or scan my body. But in this practise we're just going to be open to whatever comes. We're not establishing anything except hospitality towards everything, which occurs and this is the basic state of awareness. This is what awareness does. It's hospitable. So we can do the practise now and we do it, by merging our mind into the mind of the guru, the teachers, all the teachers we have, the mind of all the buddhas. And we do this, by imagining in the space in front of us, about an arm and a half's length, a white letter A, This A represents emptiness, which is the nature of everything. It's the basis for awakening. And it's surrounded by five-coloured light, which represents the five wisdoms that shine out of emptiness and the purity of the five elements, which constitute all the forms we encounter. We can imagine that, in our own heart also, there is a white A. These are both forms of light. And then in a relaxed, open way, we make the sound of A three times. The A allows all preoccupations and tensions to dissolve, so there is the unification of the A in the heart and the A in front of you. In that openness there is no difference between them. And then they just dissolve the way a rainbow dissolves in the sky. And we sit in the openness, which is inseparable from the mind of the buddhas and whatever comes, comes. Ah. Ah. Ah.

This is a practise you can do again and again. Many texts say this kind of guru yoga, or relaxing into the state of the guru is the quickest and most profound path available. In the tantric systems you can elaborate it with more visualisation and so on. In this simple form you have the object and the subject in non-differentiation, non-duality.

Looking at what a thought is

Then he says: "If thoughts arise from that state, these thoughts are without foundation or root, so

look clearly at the nature of whatever arises.” So if you think now of something you don’t like, whatever it would be, dogshit on the pavement, whatever it would be, just keep that thought on your mind. Here is this thought. What root or foundation does it have. Oh, maybe I stood in dogshit before and maybe I came in and it got on the carpet and it’s awful. Then the thought seems to have a root in history. I can work out why I have this thought. I’m not mad, there’s a rational basis for this thought. But what’s the basis or foundation or root of the memory of having stood in the dogshit. That’s also a thought, an associated thought. Thought arises and then it’s gone. Did it embed in anything? Sometimes we get a bit obsessional about a thought. We return to it again and again. We can’t get it out of our mind. And this repetition seems to increase it’s density. But what is it resting on? It’s there and it seems to have an impact or a power and then it’s gone. Without foundation, without a root, and yet impactful. The thought is like the wind. In the yogic system you work with the prana through the nerves, the passageways and they say the movement of the energy of the mind, a thought is like a wind or it’s like a horse galloping across the sky, a thought is blown across the sky of the mind. This is not about remembering an idea of what thought is, it’s about practising looking until you can see for yourself and you have the direct encounter ‘Oh, this is what a thought is,’.

The over invested thought

The density or the essence of the thought is the density or the essence of our belief in the thought. It’s very sad in a pathetic way, but also very interesting, to watch a small child have a temper tantrum. They can’t win, but they also won’t give up. And so it gets cranked up more and more. And the child is vanishing into a tunnel of lostness. They’ll be throwing themselves on the ground and crying very loudly, not letting you touch them. And what’s it all about? You can’t have the chocolate until I’ve paid for it and we’re out of the shop.>But it’s my chocolate.< This is your chocolate...., well we know these stories. The over invested moment. It’s not about the chocolate, it’s that one idea is flowing into another idea, is flowing into another idea, into another and it gets bigger and bigger and bigger. You’re caught by the thought. The thoughts wrap themselves around you and you can’t see anything else. This is very, very interesting. Is that what happens to us? The situation with the chocolate could be resolved if the child was in a slightly different mood. It might say, ok, we buy it, go and then I’ll have it. Once this intense investment starts, the subject and the object hook into each other. Inseparable tension generates this storm. You can see it with smaller infants when they’re starting to walk and they fall over and then they look around. Because they don’t quite know what is the status of this. >Oh, you had a big fall!< >Yeah!< And then the child’s mood goes up. Or if the parent looks worried > Oh, are you okay?< Then the child starts to cry.

Allow the thought to come and to go without a trace

So in these moments you can still see, that the first moment is still very thin, it’s transparent, it can go any way. But once the interpretive line is established, you get more and more investment and you get a big reading and a whole emotional state arises. You can observe this in ourselves and other people. And allow yourself to really see, whether the thought has some inner truth or essence. What our experience in the world and our practise can show us is: I tell the thought what it means. Thoughts catch us, because we catch thoughts. We start to adopt a position toward. We start to orient ourselves and limit ourselves in relation to what is occurring. That’s why it says: “without accepting or rejecting, remain relaxed and open.” And this is exactly the point. When you accept or reject, you are entering into a dialogue with the thought. You are directing the prana or the libido or

the chi, whatever you call life energy, into that thought and it starts to vibrate. That is to say, substantial meaning is always dialogic. It arises from our internal conversation, our inner dialogue. That's why it says, allow the thought to come and to go without trace. But if we don't let it go, if we go into a judgement or a reaction against it, thought linked onto thought, you get this build up. You get entrained and then you get this whole package deal. So, it's not the thought itself that is dangerous, but how it gets woven into a narrative.

And we read again and again, the root of suffering is attachment. This is the most subtle form of attachment. Where we won't let the thought go free. Why are you here, what do you want, can I make some use of you? Leave it alone!

Remain loose and free

“If you practise too intensely the problem of many and wild, excited thoughts will develop. So remain loose and free. On the other hand, if you're too relaxed, the problem of sinking and dullness will develop. So remain alert in the presence of awareness. And again, this is the middle way, not too tight, not too loose. So, if you're coming back from work and you're caught up in what was happening there, best to have a shower, maybe put on some music and dance, but don't do practise, which requires a very subtle, finessed attention when you're already agitated. And in the same way, if you're very tired, then have a snooze. Struggling to meditate because you feel you have to, without really being available, doesn't really make any sense. It's not about rules and compliance, but collaboration with the lived situation. Now we're going to collaborate with the lived situation of the stomach. And we will meet back here at half past two.

Free of the substance of conceptualisation

Ok, so we shall continue with the text. “Abiding in that state, the actual nature of your own state is empty clarity free of substance”. In ordinary language this just means as you look around the room that you have the confidence to trust that you see what you see. What we see is light, what we think is substance. So the clarity or the *ödza*, the natural light or the immediate clarity of what is displayed in the mind, free of the substance of conceptualisation. It says “Without thought, it is completely natural”. We need to remember this doesn't mean, that there are no thoughts at all. It simply means without getting involved in thought, without getting caught up in thinking. The mind is as it is – uninterfered. So if there are thoughts, there are thoughts, but it's not depending on thoughts, or standing in relation to them.

Awareness is without inside or outside

“Without inside or outside it is direct.” So, normally when we sit here, we feel as if we're inside our body looking out. So, there's a move from here to there. Or there to here. But awareness itself is already everywhere. And the less we rely on thoughts to make sense of what is going on, the more we have the complete disclosure of the immediacy of the field.

Great respect for the power of stupidity

“The mind is not touched by any fault or good quality whatsoever, nor obscured by any good or bad actions whatsoever.” This is a repetition of what's been said before. Buddhist texts have a lot of

repetition and that's because the people who write these texts have great respect for the power of stupidity, that we are sealed in our assumptions. And that which has been said, is in many ways quite shocking and so we want to brush it off because it is too disturbing.

Using the dharma to diminish ourselves

“The mind is not bound, it's not freed. It's naked, still and unobscured. It's not made or altered by anyone. So a normal response to this is 'well, doesn't sound like me'. This must be the buddha, I'm not the buddha. And so we can turn the dharma into a way of diminishing ourselves. But I am disturbed. I am bound. I'm not free. Whenever we find our mind going in that direction, we have to stop and see – this is a thought! Using this thought, I tell myself who I am. But who am I? And we sit with whatever is occurring. And we see, that all these definitional thoughts, that squeeze us and keep us in a small box, they are impermanent.

Freedom in the gap between the imprisoning thoughts

Like in a Hollywood movie, where the hero sits in prison, in order to get out, they have to observe the movements of the guards. And the guards go around in a regular pattern, so there is a period when you can nip out the door and out the passage. So we have the same, we have the tendency to be caught up in our thoughts. The thoughts tell us who we are. They are the prison guards. Awareness is always free, but appears to be imprisoned. We find the freedom in the gap between the imprisoning thoughts. It doesn't need to be a big gap. But we need to be present to see what is there, when there is a gap. As long as we rely on our habitual interpretation, we won't find any gap.

Circumstantial causes are not the root cause of suffering

And there is always a turbulence in our world. I was just hearing that a big fault line that runs through California is moving and it's quite active and there's danger of a big earthquake. So people have a lot of fear. So we can hold some sense of what they feel in our meditation practise and in our prayers. And of course in America in the winter they get huge snowstorms. And in the spring and in the summer they have huge storms coming in from the Caribbean. This place is not safe. Distress, trouble, difficulty arises all the time. We can do our best to show solidarity with those who suffer. The circumstantial causes of suffering are things like buildings falling down and earthquakes and storms and wars. One crisis dies down and another one arises. We're never free of crisis. The root cause of the suffering though is not the crisis. It's that we're not settled in ourselves.

Take whatever arises as the object of meditation

Then he says:” When a clear actualisation of that primordial, effortless truth arises, then, from whatever arises from that state, be it bliss, clarity or absence of thought, thinking and excitement, good and bad thoughts, or thoughts of the afflictions, or grasping thoughts that arise due to the appearances and sounds that arise due to the objects of the six senses, take whatever arises as the object of meditation.” So clarity, bliss and no thought, these are called nyams or meditation experiences, which can arise when the mind becomes more calm. And sometimes the mind shows these forms. Then we might think I'm making progress. Then the next day we experience sinking and drowsiness or excitement or dispersion. Whatever arises, he says, take that as the object of meditation. Meditation means being open and present with whatever arises.

Not mobilising in response to a thought

Our ordinary worldly attention increases and decreases accordingly to the impact of the object. This is obvious when you walk down the street and most of what you encounter is almost invisible to you. No memory recall of it at all. But if something strikes us as interesting, we attend to it, if it strikes us as dangerous or disturbing we pay attention and it registers. What he's saying very clearly is, that this is not how to proceed. Because otherwise you're always on the dimmer switch tuning in, tuning out. We give equal welcome, equal openness to everything which occurs. So, if a thought arises and then another thought arises that says 'I don't like this', to the first thought we say 'welcome!', to the second thought we say 'welcome!' We don't have to activate ourselves on the basis of the second thought. Because it's only by not mobilising in response to the thought that you can see the emptiness of the thought.

The movement of allowing thought

“Without accepting or rejecting, inhibiting or encouraging in any way, stay clear and relaxed with whatever thoughts arise. By this thoughts need not be rejected.” And this is very important because... you get lots of adverts for courses on meditation in everyday life. Well, meditation which is not about daily life is not much use. A meditation which allows the presence of thought moves seamlessly into daily life. To have a job is to be busy and thinking. There are decisions to be made. Is it better to do this or to do that. You have to weigh things up. All of that involves the use of concepts which are taken to be significant. In the meditation practise we allow the thought to be there without having to react to it. Which is actually a very good preparation for thinking about problems at work. It diminishes the intensity of our automatic reactivity. So, the movement of allowing thoughts is helpful in every situation.

Buddha is awareness aware of its own ground

“Mind itself is not mere emptiness, for its innate clarity arises naturally as the dharmakaya or natural mode.” The dharmakaya is the mind of the buddha. This is our mind. We get used to thinking in terms of hierarchies and that the buddha is very high, way above us. But in order to awaken to our nature, we need to understand what the buddha is. The buddha is awareness aware of its own ground. All the qualities of the buddha arise from that. So, this capacity is already intrinsic to us.

Life is not improved by protecting it

Then he says: “At all times, whether, eating, moving, sleeping or sitting, you must unwaiveringly maintain the state of non-meditation. Non-meditation is a technical term meaning not having any specific structure of meditation that you follow. So when I was sitting and having lunch, chatting with different people and the little baby arrives and playing around with the baby. Each of these situations has its value. In fact, each has the same value. We give our full awareness to the situation. And this is non-meditation. What is worthy of our attention? Everything. Everything. So, we're open to what is there. Otherwise, we're hiding bits of ourselves. When we think 'this is a bit boring, why would I bother? It's very easy - why would I bother? Our life is not like a bundle of 500 Euro notes that you keep in a bank vault in Switzerland. Life is not improved by protecting it.

Not having an agenda

You don't get up in the morning with a hundred units of attention, which you have to dole out in small doses throughout the day. Everything is fascinating. It becomes fascinating because we give ourselves to it. There is this old Tibetan saying – even a dog's tooth will give out light if it's appreciated. The object shines because of the light of the subject. So, as it says in the song 'turn your lovelight on me'. So, if you turn your lovelight on everything, the whole world is shining. The world is a potential which has to be respected and evoked through our giving ourselves to it. It's a very old idea that the more you give, the more you get. And in terms of attention I think it's completely true. We learn so much about life just by being fully there. Watching how the cook comes out and the way he's attentiv to the food. You see the power of tenderness in the cook. Not bossy not controlling, but very present. All day long the myriad patterns of the world are available in front of us to enjoy, learn from. So, non-meditation here means not having an agenda, not having a shopping list. Be careful of submitting to selective attention.

Equally open to everything

Of course sometimes we have to focus on particular tasks. But as we saw yesterday with the tree, the tree is in the ground, the ground is in the garden, the garden is in Berlin. So the focussing of attention needn't involve a decontextualisation. We see this one thing and it's relatedness. And this is vital because we, the ego are part of the emergent field. When we give selective attention to an object and cut it off from its field, we do the same to ourselves. We pay attention to ourselves and forget our enmeshment with everything else. So, equanimity is a quality that you see being praised a great deal, to be equally open to everything. And this of course is linked to the bodhisattva practise. We say 'may all beings be happy'. May all the refugees be happy. May all children in hospital be happy. May all torturers and murderers be happy. Our wish that everyone is happy includes everyone. Our wish for their happiness is not a reward for their having been a good person. It's a very profound basis in Buddhism that there are no intrinsically bad people. Selfishness, cruelty, murderous intention arises from ignorance. Seeing this, recognising that all beings have buddha nature, we can have an equal attention to everyone.

The essence of awareness transcends conceptualisation

“If you find that you lose recollection of your natural clarity, then, as explained above, you will be obscured by ignorance.” No matter how much virtue of your compounded body and voice you perform, it does not pass beyond the first level of co-emergent ignorance. Then he says: “Now why is this the case? The essence of ignorance is wavering, obscuration, dullness unconsciousness, non-recollection, carelessness and lazyness. The essence of awareness is self-awareness of one's own own falseness and so is clarity and emptiness. It is naked, friendless and alone, with a nature that transcends conceptualisation, so stay just exactly in awareness without doing anything else.” If your arousal to move to help other people involves a forgetfulness of your own ground, your compassion becomes a method of maintaining ignorance.

Too busy to find what's there from the beginning

In many different ways he is saying the same thing: relax into awareness, relax into awareness and within that awareness you will find everything. When you are forgetful of open awareness, you lose the natural clarity of the mind and all you have left is the dull illumination of conceptual formation. And within that state, no matter how much effort you make, you won't find natural purity. What he's pointing at here is something very strange. Essentially the whole text says: you won't find the buddha while busy, you'll only find the buddha on holiday. And we say 'oh, but I'm too busy to go

on holiday'. Really? What are you so busy about? I'm trying to find the buddha. This is our madness. From the very beginning this is your mind. If we really take that seriously and we go into the practise and trust, day by day we can go into it a little wider, a little deeper until spacious awareness is with us all the time.

No activity that is not the play of the energy of awareness

So then he's talking about the third aspect, the activity. "At all times, in all situations, do not allow awareness to go under the power of good or bad conditions. On the outside, do not engage in worldly activities. On an outer level that means don't be unnecessarily busy in the world. But as we've looked, worldly activities doesn't mean going shopping. It means going shopping in a state of distraction. If you maintain the state of non-meditation you can go shopping, and cooking and clean the dishes, helping the kids with the homework. Awareness is infinite and there's no activity which is not the activity of the play of the energy of awareness.

Don't move

"Do not do any dharma practise whatsoever. Become completely familiar with the one true practise of experiencing your own awareness as the essence of the buddhas of the three times." This is very difficult. This is very challenging. Sometimes I find the content of my own mind so boring and tedious, that spontaneously I'm reciting mantras. Because mantra means mind protector. The mantra protects my mind from me: this is not dzogchen. Now I found something that I can do, that makes me feel better. As it's saying, the practise is to stay with the mind as it is. This is the one true practise of all the buddhas.

We remember the story of Buddha Shakyamuni. He spent 6 years on the Naranjana river, practising different kinds of yoga, asceticism and so on. One day he decided he wasn't making any progress, so he decided to be very nice to himself and he got some kusha grass and he made a soft seat. And by chance, luck or good karma, a girl came from the local village and gave him some rice pudding. So, sitting there, my bum is comfortable, my belly is full, aaah! ... what will I do? I've tried so many things, I'm not going to do anything. So then the maras, the demons arise in frightening forms, erotic forms and try to pull him into engagement. But he's unmoving, touches the earth. I am as stable as the earth, I don't move.

The non-duality through which the buddha awakened

The mind is moving, but the mind is not moving. By not being disturbed by the movement of the mind, the stillness of the mind remains manifest in the presence of movement. And this was the non-duality through which the buddha awakened. And this is just what's being presented here. So, the one true practise of experiencing your own awareness as the essence of the buddhas of all three times!

But if you imagine the Buddha would always have happy, shiny thoughts and you see that your own thoughts are not happy and shiny, then you have a conclusion, that you're not practising properly and you want to go off and find some other practise. Because I want to get some signs of progress. But the focus is on the unchanging mind. And funnily enough, the unchanging mind doesn't progress. The ego wants progress. It wants a return on investment. Why should I bother if I don't have a gain? Dzogchen says: quite right, don't bother.

The Result conventionally known as buddhahood

Then he goes on to the section on the result: “With the completion of that practise of one’s own awareness, it is present without effort or intellectual activity. And through this, the three modes of awareness, the openness, the clarity and the non-dual participation are realised in their own place and one gains the result which is conventionally known as buddhahood.” So, the openness of awareness is the unborn, natural mode: dharmakaya. The immediacy of awareness is the innate clarity of the radiant mode or samboghakaya. The energy of awareness is the all pervading, manifest mode. The nirmanakaya. Then he says: ”In the original nature as it is from the very beginning these three modi or aspects are inseparable as the single point of actuality.” The single point or thigle is a small ball which has no corners or no beginning or no end. So it shows no differentiation. So he’s saying, that these three modes exist in one, single, little drop. And then one is indistinguishable from the buddha mind of Samantabhadra. One goes directly to the Akanishta, which is the highest of the buddha realms, where we gain buddhahood as a complete buddha. Which is good news. So, very politely he says: “Please keep that in mind.”

The mirror never owned a reflection

Now he goes on to the result of the three modes. And he considers again the ground. The ground has two purities and this is the sign of the natural mode or *ngowo*. The first is primordial or natural purity, in Tibetan *kadag*. He says: “From beginningless time, the ground has been naturally pure. It’s essence is empty, devoid of self-substance. It’s free of all interpretations. It’s not an object of the intellect. And it transcends causes and conditions. It’s beyond thought and expression. It is clarity as the sphere of awareness. From beginningless time it has been naturally, perfectly pure.” This is like the natural emptiness of the mirror. The mirror has never owned any picture or image of the mirror. It is from the very beginning empty of any self-substance. So this is its natural purity.

The mirror is not marked by the reflection

Then secondly, there is stainless purity. The stains of the adventitious three forms of ignorance are removed by the three forms of awareness, revealing the void clarity of instant awareness free of obscuration.” So you look in the mirror, see your face and think: ‘Ugh, I look a bit rough! Many emotions and commitments to change one’s lifestyle. Ah! But in one instant you can cut the root of all these troublesome thoughts: this is not me, this is a reflection! I don’t think it’s me at all. Some imposter is pretending to be me. Seeing the illusory nature, the empty nature of the arising, the stain which seemed to be embodied in the shape of the presentation, the thought, feeling and so on, which was being grasped at as truly real, this is an illusion. I am taking this as real. There is no truth to it. The reflection doesn’t mark the mirror. The mirror isn’t improved by a beautiful reflection and it isn’t abused, set down by an ugly reflection.

Seeing the purity of the impurity

So this is not the purity that is achieved by removing the impurity, this is seeing the purity of the impurity. There has never been an impurity. Ignorance generates delusion and in the delusion I am a bad person and I need to try harder. As we’ve looked, this is generated by internal splitting in which I judge myself harshly. This entire play of self-attack, self-deprecation and so on, is being staged by a display of empty signifiers. It was empty from the very beginning. So, the way to purify the impurities is to see the emptiness of the impurities. And in being empty, there is no substance that we take to be the impurity. The self-liberation of phenomena is their purity.

Aloneness of the mind is infinite awareness

“One’s innate clarity is raw, steady, naked, single and alone.” Alone here doesn’t mean lonely. The aloneness of the mind is the infinity of awareness. Within this awareness, there arises the field which I am. I’m in the field with other people. It’s not that I’m in the field as an individual. My separate person, my separate personness is generated by my own deluded conceptualisation. We are always connected with others. We’re in this room, we sit together, we breathe in, we breathe out. The air from my breath goes out and in your nostrils and down your throat and into your lungs, crossing over the barrier, some of this air goes into your bloodstream. It goes into your feet, into your heart, into your brain and into the private bits you keep in your knickers. What was in me, is now in you. Round and round and round.....Of course as we breathe in, we are breathing in very fine particles of skin, which are falling off us moment by moment by moment. The idea of being isolated and alone is an illusion.

Untouched and intimately connected at once

Alone means the infinity of the mind which includes everything. Alone here means non-dual. It doesn’t mean separate and apart, it means whole and inclusive. Everything is in the mind, but doesn’t touch the mind. The emptiness of the mind fills with experience, yet the mind is untouched by the experience that fills it. So our awareness is both completely pure, completely untouched and yet intimately connected with everything. The world is our experience. We see the birds, the flowers, the sad people in the park, the happy children on the swings. We give them our attention. We’re impacted by their shaping, posture, gesture and so on. We’re in a constant intimate communication with what’s arising.

Allow anxiety to be there

So this is the purity of the mind. And that’s why if you follow this line of practise, you never give up on yourself. Feeling hopeless, worthless, limited, frightened, these are experiences which arise. Without rejecting them or pretending they’re not there and without merging into them and believing they are the real truth of our existence, they are there as temporary patternings of experience. When we get caught up in our fears and anxieties, as he said just before, then we should loosen, relax the intensification of our identification and just allow the anxiety to be there. But when I get anxious, my heart starts beating and I feel a bit sweaty and tense and I can’t think straight. This is wonderful news. We have all the symptoms of anxiety. Perfect! You’re anxious for a while. If you take it as a sign that something is wrong, if you take it as a definition of yourself, you’re doing something artificial. You just relax and accept - ‘I’m anxious’. Then the anxiety goes by itself. What did it mean that I was anxious? When I asked C.R. Lama, my teacher, that kind of question, he would answer, when you see Samantabhadra, the big number one Buddha, you ask him that question, but don’t ask me.

So let’s do a little practise. We’ll do again the three A, visualising the white A in front of us and relax and open and sit with whatever is arising. A A A

We’ll take a break now and as I said before this book of the collected writings of C.R.Lama is available now in English and German. Robert translated it into German. It was a great work to do and something which I hope will be of great value to interested people. That’s a very general way of saying, please buy the book. Okay, we have a break for twenty minutes.

Being close to others, but not permeated by them

He then deals with the issue of how we understand the world that we're operating in. According to the tradition, the field of all phenomena, called the *dharmadatu* or in Tibetan *choying*, is the place where all the buddhas reside. It means, it's the space that contains all phenomena, which includes ourselves. It's the realm of non-duality or no splitting, no separation. And within that, we have manifestation in the world in which unpredictable events arise. So the reliability and certainty of residing in the inseparability of space and awareness or emptiness and awareness is the basis for our freedom and flexibility to respond to all situations. All we've been looking at, is how to use meditation as a kind of massage to relax the tensions and rigidity that we carry with us. And this flexibility is in the service of the other. To be for the other doesn't mean to go under the thumb of the other. We're for others, which means we see how they can be helped, but we also need to keep an eye on their pathology or perversity. Sentient beings have the five poisons. They have many assumptions and fixed beliefs, they have a lot of desire, anger, jealousy and pride. So we need to be close to them, but not permeated by them.

The openness of the buddha's mind is not like the baby's openness

Small babies learn huge amounts in the first year of life. They are very open. And they are open and porous, so they are internalising huge amounts of information about how people behave and how they can behave and so on. And that's one of the delights about being around children. We get a bit opened up by their openness. But the babies are also kind of vulnerable at this, because they don't have much capacity to control the kind of things that they're absorbing. So we need to be clear, that the openness of the buddha's mind is not like the baby's openness. Awareness is open, receptive, undefended, but impervious. It doesn't absorb like paper. It is in intimate connection to everything, but not contaminated. We were already on that in the section on purity. So when we're in the world with others, we need to always maintain this balance of open receptivity and also connectivity without going under the power of the other, without being inducted into their personal or psychological patterning. So this is a combination of warmth and being for the other and at the same time seeing what the other is up to. Because if you start to absorb other people's energy and you're not able to dissolve it easily, then you'll get burned out.

Patterns which arise because we are willing to be caught.

When we sit with our own pain and confusion, there is all this habit formation that arises in the meditation. By allowing it to be there and then self-dissolving it, we're learning not to take our own sufferings too seriously. When you really see the illusory nature of your own misery, then you have an ethical basis for seeing the illusory nature of other people's misery. But if you take your own pain seriously and disregard other people's pain, that's not really the dharma. Nor is it the dharma to take other people's pain seriously and disregard your own. These are patterns which arise because we are willing to be caught.

I will be available to help other people help themselves

There are very few real victims in the world. Dreadful things can happen in life, but victim is a way of reading the situation. Buddhist teaching is an anti-victim analysis. Because it says everything you experience arises as the result of your own previous actions? Someone treats you very badly, so it seems obvious you could blame them for treating you badly. You betrayed me, you broke my heart.

I'll never forgive you. This is a particular reading of the situation that the other has the power to hurt me. The dhammapada, one of the very early buddhist texts, says: not mother, not father, not brother, not sister, not friend, not enemy, nobody harms you more than you yourself. And then it repeats this and says: and no one can help you more than yourself. This puts your life back in your hand. So part of compassion is treating other people to the dignity of being responsible for their own situation. If we see that somebody needs rescuing, that is placing them in a particular situation. So when we take the bodhisattva vow and say we will save all sentient beings, really what this means is, I will be available to help other people help themselves. Because the way to awaken is to see the ground of your own being.

The main way to help is to not project

So how could we help someone else to see the ground of their being? You can't do it for them. Because that would be ridiculous. How is that possible? They would have to see it. And it's possible for them to see it. We can see other things about people than they can see. For example I can see the back of Robert's head. And even if Robert was to practise yoga for twenty years, he would not be able to see the back of his head. But it may well be that Robert has no need to see the back of his head. One photograph is probably enough. But we need to see our own nature. How do we do that? By entering the practise. Nobody can do it for us. But what we can do is to provide the beneficial situations that make that possible. So, on an outer level we can make donations to help build retreat centers and so on. We can help make teachings available through websites and so on. I am not at all technical as a person, so I'm helped a lot by quite a range of persons who put up audio and video recordings. All of these things are helping others, because people now can look at the videos. But the main way to help other people is to not project onto them. To offer other people the welcome that allows them to reveal to us, which is simultaneously to reveal them to themselves.

Human interaction flows out of the openness of the mind

Our own falseness is our own not seeing ourself. As he said, all the problems that we have spread out from this basic fault of turning the wrong way, of disregarding our own being. This is the real basis of compassion. Because if we're not clear, then our method is simply mixing their opacity with theirs. The blind lead the blind in a merry dance. Compassion arises from wisdom and the focus of this kind of text is on wisdom. From this point of view of dzogchen you don't need to develop compassion because it is the natural quality of the mind. As the limits of our self-referential activity start to dissolve, we find ourselves being more available for other people. And then we start to find that we don't need to know what to do. Most human interactions don't require technical knowledge. They require an availability and a good will and an ability to be close with the other person. So this flows out of the openness of the mind.

So although we don't focus on talking about love and compassion or wishing other people well, it's implicit in the practise. Selfishness arises out of having a limited self and trying to increase its welfare and protect it from danger. And the less we have a sense that we have to protect ourselves, the more available we are for others. And the more we allow other people to show themselves, the more precisely we can find a way of meeting them.

Why would we not want to benefit other people?

Then he again gives a little summary of how to do the practise. So he says.... - we're just jumping

on a bit.... he says: “At the beginning of each practise session you must begin by developing very pure bodhicitta, both aspiration and actual practise. This means, both the intention to benefit other beings and to engage in a practise, which by generating merit is shared with others, will bring about an actual benefit for them. So, it’s both the aspiration to benefit beings and performing actual benefit for others by engaging in a practise which can then be dedicated to others. And you can do this in an elaborate ritual way or you can open yourself and this is for all. And in one way the most amazing thing is, that there’s such a stress on bodhicitta because it seems such an amazing thing to do. Because the simple fact is, I am sitting here, I’m not able to see my own face. I have to see your face. If I make you unhappy, I have to see your sour face. If I can make you a little happier then I can see your happier face. It makes me more happy to see your happy face than to see your sour face. So why would we not want to benefit other people? It’s that simple. We all live in a world where we constantly see other people’s faces and not our own. So the welfare of all is our own welfare. Our welfare in terms of our freedom and availability is also the welfare of all.

Owing a debt of gratitude

So in general we reflect that all beings in samsara have been our mothers in a previous life. This is to say that we have a karmic link with all beings, as well as a direct, phenomenological one. And therefore we meet other people with a debt of obligation. We’re linked to all beings and we owe them a debt of gratitude. This is a very interesting reflection and a very effective antidote to the feeling that you want to have a secondary gain from others. Helping others is not then demonstrating that we are a good person, we’re just paying off a bit of the debt we’ve accumulated. There are many ways of expressing these dharma ideas and if that doesn’t suit you, we have others on the menu. So “Develop an aspiration for them to be free of suffering and enjoy happiness and think of quickly establishing them in Buddhahood.”

Many different methods, same function

So, how shall we do that? You can imagine when you’re doing the practise that all beings in the six realms are sitting around you and (are) doing the same practise. You can imagine that all sentient beings in samsara are gathered together in the A in your heart. There are many different methods around and they all have the same function, not to act on your own, your self. We act with others for others. And that keeps opening the picture. In order to really be compassionate you have to have a big pot inside you. The union of awareness and emptiness is the infinite source which has resources enough to take care of all beings. So compassion flows out of that awareness. If you’re compassionate out of a good thought, that thought can become very small and tired. And then we have regrets. You, who were the rescuer now turn into the victim. So we can imagine this A and you can elaborate that to imagine that the letter A is not just surrounded by rainbow light, but is in the heart of the teacher, who could be Padmasambhava, Tara or your own teacher and around them are all the great gurus and teachers, who dissolve into them.

The shoe has to fit

Just as we have different periods in art with different styles, we have different styles of meditation practise. Some visualisations are like baroque churches. Huge refuge trees with hundreds and hundreds of lamas and books and flowers and ponds. And for some people that can be quite evocative and inspiring and for others it’s too much and they prefer just onewhite letter A. So this is the richness of the dharma, to stay in touch with yourself and find the kind of practise that would suit you. Because it’s a kind of to and fro shuffle at this point. The holy dharma is very high. I will

follow the holy dharma, but what about me? If I'm going to walk the long road to enlightenment in shoes that don't fit, that's not really helpful. So who am I? Dharma is for me. Dharma has many possibilities - who are you? Finding the interface is intelligence. It's not about squeezing yourself into a form that isn't right. We have to remember that the happy ending in the story of Cinderella is because the shoe fits.

A method to bring subject and object together

So then if you're visualising the guru, you can see light coming from the forehead from a white letter Om, from the throat a red letter A, from the heart a blue letter Hung and then these coming simultaneously. And these then purify all faults and limitations. Then you imagine the guru comes to the crown of your head and dissolves down into you and you dissolve into the guru and then there's one ball of light which dissolves into nothing. This is the way in which subject and object are brought together. And because it's a practise that you can bring your faith and devotion and desperation and hopelessness and rage and you can bring all of you into it. It's an emotional engine to drive it. The bond created allows non-distraction of the mind, so when you do the dissolving, you're fully present. That method is slightly different from the three A that we been doing or from relaxing into the outbreath as we did in the beginning. But the principle is the same.

Two types of vehicles

The barriers between me and my own awareness are like gossamer. Gossamer is like a very fine cloth. It refers really to the fine thing you get on a dandy lion. It's very, very fine. It's supposed to be the cloth that is woven by the fairies. And so we should trust it. If you imagine enlightenment is far away because you're a bad person or a limited person, these thoughts themselves are the barrier. All beings have buddha nature, including ourselves. So this is the focus of the practise. Generally, the tibetan schema of the nine modes of practise is divided into two groupings. There are the vehicles, or the methods of the cause, which is to say I have the seed or the potential for becoming a buddha and I'm going to practise, to create the causes to bring this into ripening and fruition. And then we have the vehicles of the result, in which we act as if the result had already been achieved. So we visualise: I am Tara or I am Padmasambhava. This is who I really am. Or relax into unborn, open awareness and in an instant we are present in the dharmakaya.

Different ways of dealing with obstacles

Of course when we do these practises of the result, we encounter obscurations. But instead of the obstacles being between me and where I want to get to, my enlightenment, these are obstacles which are potentially destructive from my experience of being the buddha. So, they are like wasps at a picnic. You sit in a nice park and you get your food out and bzzzzz. I just wanted to relax! I've been working all week. These f***ing.... So then your friends say 'listen, we're having a picnic, it's fine. It's just a couple of wasps, don't worry. Don't focus on them, they're not causing any trouble. Then we settle back into the practise. Then bzzzzzz! Bzzzzz. Why is my mind like this? So this is the way obstacles arise in the practise.

So what we have to do is either you keep them out, so if you're doing a tantric practise you first visualise a big tent of vajras all around and then a wall of blazing fire and so on, but in a dzogchen practise we allow the obscuration to be there. They're just part of the mind. And by not giving a strong, negative attribution to them, they show that they're just empty, impermanent phenomena. So when we have the sense that we relax into the original, enlightened state of mind, we're not doing some amateur dramatic course. We're simply waking up to how it's been from the very beginning.

So whether we dissolve into the state of the guru or relax into the lights of the three Ah or relax into the open breath, we're now just here.

The future is simply idle speculation

So then he gives the instruction for the meditation. "Don't go after past ideas. Don't wait expectantly for future ideas. Free your present awareness from effort and contrivance." An idea was there and it's gone. What will be gained by going after it? Why did I have this thought? Oh, I must remember to do that. It's gone. Whatever value it had, it's gone. Other thoughts will arise. Oh, but that one was really important. It's all just thought. As soon as we think we're having some special thought, we've gone into prejudice. Now it's not at all uncommon when we're doing the practise, that some solution to problems arises, because we're relaxed and more open and there can be a free flow of our mental configuration. This is a dangerous gift. Because, thinking this thought is special, we put it above other thoughts. We want to hang on to this, we don't want to any more thoughts until we finish the practise, and can write this one down. So we have to return to the basic principle: you will get more if you let it go. Gone. You're here. When you're thinking about the future, you're poking around in nowhere land. What will happen? Who knows? Who cares? If we're not dead, something will happen. But what will it be? Nobody knows. People go to tibetan Lamas to get *mos* or predictions done. Everywhere there's gambling opportunities available – horseracing, which team will win the world cup, and so on. As far as I know, there's no tibetan system for predicting which horse is going to win the big race. In which case we might have a general conclusion: nobody knows much about the future. It's simply idle speculation. So, don't do it.

We let go of awareness because thought allows arousal

A thought comes: 'what will I do next week? Should I ring my mother?' It's a thought. It doesn't matter. Again, we go back, the meaning is in your attachment. So that's why he's saying: "free your present awareness from effort and contrivance." There's no need to mobilise, because there's nothing to get. You got what you wanted. You got the dharmakaya, the empty, open mind. Settle into that. Oh, but these thoughts are rather tasty. So you follow the thought. And you get lost again. What did the thought give you? Distraction. What does relaxing and opening give you? A taste of your own original nature. Thoughts cheat us again and again. It's not their fault, it's their structure. They don't have substance. They don't last long. They are unreliable. You can spend your whole life on little one night relationships. There's always people who are waiting to do something exciting, but it might get a bit tiring. A little bit of stability might be better.

The most stable relationship you'll ever have is with your own mind and that's because you are your own mind. Free of duality. Nobody to talk to at two o'clock in the morning. Because they won't let you get to sleep, because they're upset. That's one of the aspects of coupledness. So, this is really important. It's so weird. We let go of the best for the worst. And that's because the words, or the thought, allows arousal. The grasping, the mobilisation, the sense of importance, the prejudicial judgements about this being better than that. It gives the ego something to do and awareness does not do that.

Flowing in its own mode, like water tumbling down a mountainside

"Keep the mind free of contrivance, naturally relaxed and flowing in its own mode." Contrivance is a kind of artificiality. So for example, if you're very tired and feeling kind of sleepy, you might straighten yourself, tighten yourself in and focus. And it will allow your attention to be a little bit more alert. But it's artificial. Instead of gently tuning into focused attention, finding yourself in a

state of focused attention, you coerce yourself. And this artificiality is unhelpful. It can't be sustained and it's distorting. So, stay naturally relaxed and let the mind flow. It takes a while to experience the natural relaxation of the mind. Everything happens without effort. This is almost impossible for us to hear. But out of emptiness arises everything. Nobody is doing it. It's not done by god, it's not made by any particular effort. It just is. So trusting emptiness is also trusting the immediacy of the display of clarity. But the thing about this is, it's flowing in its own mode, which is a translation of the term *rangwa*, which means 'like water tumbling down a mountainside'. It is not directed or controlled or shaped.

The key thing is not to try to make sense of it (Urban environments create a fantasy of control)

This is referring to what we looked at before – whatever comes, comes. So, we're relaxed and we let everything happen as it does. At first you might feel a little bit mad or out of control. My mind will collapse! What is all this stuff?! The key thing is not to try to make sense of it. The point is in the clarity which refers to the mere facticity of emergence. Again, the same example: when you look outside and you see all the trees and bushes with the leaves, the immediacy of the givenness is the vitality of the mind. We don't have to count the leaves or take them off or organise them in a collector's book. On one level you could say the garden is a complete jumble. All kinds of things are coming together. And it's like this. It's not organised in a kind of horticultural garden way. So, you don't have too much sense of an imposed organisation, but the plants are allowed to find their way. Some have space to thrive in the sunshine, others are a bit cramped in the shade and there's something big over them. This is as it comes. This is what he means with the mind. There is clarity, because there is facticity. This is here. But it's not organised according to any program. And if the normal tilt of your personality is to look for prediction so that you know what is what. Especially if you live in the city. It's a completely artificial environment. Straight roads, buildings with sharp edges, rooms like this with sharp edges. If you look at this room and then look out at the trees, it's incredible. You don't find straight lines out there. You find nothing but straight lines in here. But if you get used to an urban environment with all these straight lines, it creates this fantasy of control. These are planned environments, housing estates. Robert was commenting earlier, that in Freiburg, where he's from, as an older city, that's grown a bit organically, the streets are much more tight and tangled. So we have to be aware of the programming that can go into increasing our sense that we should know what's what.

Getting the sense of being relaxed, grounded and open

“Our mind is relaxed without sinking, calm without being tightly focused.” Sinking is when you start to lose your clarity and you're almost falling asleep and the body feels a bit heavy and it gets a bit hazy. And you want to be calm without being tightly focused. That means, you're not doing it through intense effort. So this is very similar to learning to ride a bicycle. When you start to sit on a bicycle, you don't really have a sense of what balance is. And so we have the tendency to fall to the one side or the other. And the body tenses in its fear of falling over, loses its flexibility, which gives you a rigidity, that is less able to work with the circumstances. But once you have a sense of how the balance is, it's something that you work with. It's not something that you have, because it's not stable, it's dynamic. The balance is maintained through micro adjustments. These are adjustments as it were, within the state of balance. So it's not a kind of crude adjustment, but it's more subtle. So if that image makes sense, that's the quality we want to bring into the practise. Because if you try to adjust yourself by moving yourself around, or tightening up your muscles or deepening your breath, if you do that in a strong way, then again you've got subject, object and the connection between

them. So what he's gesturing towards here is a kind of non-conceptual adjustment, a kind of feeling tone. With that you get more and more sense of when you're grounded and when you're relaxed. Grounded, relaxed and open. This is not a fixed state, a thing. We're not sitting like a stone on the seat. You're alive, so all sorts of movements are occurring. But by staying in this, these micro adjustments don't tear or disrupt the flow of experience.

Tips about how to stay in the saddle

“Without striving, remain tranquil.” We've just been looking at that. “Without grasping, stay loose. Without sinking stay sparkling and alert. Maintain clarity free of dullness, sharpness, free of obscurity.” This kind of instruction we need to take very gently and softly massage it into us. They're not finger-wagging instructions -- you must do this! – rather, these are encouragements to find your way. Each of us must find our own way. Nobody can do it for us. But these are kinds of tips about how to stay in the saddle, how to stay in the movement of the mind without moving with the mind. This is why we do these practises again and again. If possible a few times a day for months and years.

If you look around the world you see young girls who want to be ballet dancers. A dancer's life is pretty much finished at thirty-five and often before. A high likelihood of getting anorexia, certainly getting problems with the ankles and the joints later. But people go to ballet classes two, three times a week and practise and practise and practise for something that lasts so little time. This is the original nature which lasts forever. If this teenage girl has to learn to go on her points, which is quite painful, we can learn to do the practise.

Naked but safe

“Remain naked, free of covering.” This is very important. Because clearly there are certain feeling tones or thoughts, which can catch us or swamp us. We feel that this is happening to me and we notice some kind of shift. But we also have these more subtle states, which are insidious, that seem to creep in and take us over.

Tiredness can be like that. You get a bit vague and hazy. Suddenly we're pervaded by this sort of feeling. So when he's saying “stay naked, free of covering”, this is a difficult covering to get free of. We have to very gently intensify clarity.

So we're sitting, get into that state, the gaze is open, take a breath and as it were, breathe out through your eyes. Bringing up the energy in your body through the eyes. There's a little bit more brightness. The hazy feeling is still there, but there is bright and hazy. And gradually the haziness passes away. And we stay with the brightness.

The mind is always naked. That's why he was saying before: it's alone, it's singular, it's pure from the very beginning. And it's empty. There is nowhere for the foggy feeling to stick. The mind is like the sky. This fogginess is like a cloud.

Trust the spaciousness. You're full of tiredness and you're safe. You're full of sadness, you feel like crying. Maybe water comes out of your eyes and you're safe. So, in this way trust the practise, go back again and again, whenever you get distracted, relax and open and welcome.

Calm abiding

“Without developing thoughts, remain clear. By remaining like that, you will experience freedom from craving for the meditation experiences of clarity, non-thought and happiness and you will have

non-distraction without the object to maintain and immediate presence of emptiness and clarity. This is called calm abiding or shine or shamata.”

I think you`re all doing very well. It`s a long day. A lot of stuff. Everyone`s looking a bit tired. Just a little bit more.

So, this is the basic calmness which is not created by artificial practise, but by relaxing into the natural calm of the mind. And it frees us, as he says, from the attachment of seeking special states. We can read in meditation books about all kinds of special experiences. People have visions and colours and this and that. But always our focus is, we stay with what is there. If it`s dull it`s dull, if it`s shiny, it`s shiny.

“Then emptiness does not become a mere vacuity. It is clear, empty, sharp, fresh, lucid. You`d like to say something, but speaking is not possible. You`d like to express it but that is not possible.” At home in the emptiness of mind, there`s nothing to say. We can talk about houses and flowers and pizzas, but we can`t really talk about the mind. So, it becomes very peaceful. It`s not an object of thought. It`s not a thing that can be described or expressed. There`s a lot of freedom in that. That is to say, we can`t take this quality and pull it through the usual pathways of our cognitive function. It is radically other than what we`re used to?

Serial description is always an evacuation of direct experience

“Clear, it is the sphere of awareness. In the actual nature of emptiness, clarity is present like a manifesting quality. Thus the actual nature of your awareness is directly and completely seen. This is called `seeing fully`, *lagthong* or *vipassana*. So, if you sit there quiet and this room is not something you can describe. As soon as you start to describe it, you enter another room. When you`re relaxed, the whole room comes at once. When we try to describe something, it comes one word after another, after another. So this linear or serial description is always an evacuation from the thing that`s being described.

Seeing fully

We can experience this directly for ourselves. Take a simple rose, put it on the table and give yourself to the rose. Open to the indescribable beauty of the flower. See it from your heart and then try to say what you see. Impossible! That doesn`t mean that you didn`t have the experience of the rose. It means that the rose is welcoming you home. And you can`t say.... you can`t say. It`s indescribable, inexpressible. But it is absolutely present. You`re fully alive. You`re so touched and moved. What can you say? It`s lovely. It`s not lovely, it`s (gasp!) So this is what we have in the meditation. The fact that we can`t chop it up into pieces and make into patterns, like some dharma collage, to show mommy when we get home from school, doesn`t mean it`s meaningless or that it`s crazy.

“Regarding what is known as meditation, or staying in balance: awareness, the inseparable merging of calm abiding and insight or seeing fully, is nakedly clear, original and untainted.” Then he says, that this is the natural state of the buddha. So we should rest in this. And to not move out of this is called meditation.

What occurs after meditation

Then there is another state that is described as subsequent experience, *jethob(?)*, what occurs after

meditation. About this he says that you should keep your mind relaxed and open to whatever is arising and also in relation to whatever thoughts arise regarding the objects of the six senses. So we'll soon come to the end of our time together today and we will go out into this lovely evening, we have the sensation of touch, we can feel our clothes, as our arms move inside our sleeve and so on. There are smells, subtle tastes in our mouths, sounds, shape and colour. Without falling asleep into a kind of automatic pilot, while we walk along the road, thinking about something else, stay present in your senses and without the addition of a running commentary and then you experience the self-arising clarity of the immediacy of the sensation as it comes with the union of the senses and the world. We don't want to get lost in assumptions, letting our body run on auto pilot, nor do we go to the other side and run a commentary about what's going on, in order to be more conscious of it. But we just stay freshly present in the senses.

Vitalised by the world

We had a little painting of Kuntuzangpo and Kuntuzangmo – ah there. When these deities are depicted in union, this is also a symbol of the six senses and the world. So when we are alive and in our senses, everything is pleasure. Not the pleasure that's saying, 'oh this is really good! But the pleasure of the vitality of being alive, the naked thisness of what's occurring moment by moment through the senses. The world and our senses, as it expresses through our senses, is in a union, a copulation, a joining. We're alive. This is amazing! So the more we give ourselves to the world, the more we are vitalised by it.

But when we kind of switch off and we're thinking our thoughts, wandering through the streets, this is such a tragedy. What are you going to get from the thought? The cars, the sounds, the people spilling out on the pavement from the cafe, the posture, the gesture, the smell of the beer drifting in the breeze. This is our being aliveness. There's no point of awakening, if you're going to be asleep at the same time. Being awake means receiving and giving, being touched and moved. Again, we don't know what's going to happen. Something is happening and we're being here. We're here. It's the being-here-ness which is the aliveness, it's the self-dissolving of each moment.

The result are the three kayas

So then he says: "By practising in this way, you get the result of the three aspects of the buddha. Thus the vibrancy or the awareness is the natural mode or the dharmakaya..." Here that's very beautiful – the vibrancy! This is not dull. Everything has the same taste, but it's vibrant. "...the shining clarity of the union of emptiness and awareness – the radiant mode, the samboghakaya..." You're relaxed and open and all of this is occurring. "...and all the self-arising, self-liberating manifest mode or nirmanakaya."

Everything is the nirmanakaya

The nirmanakaya is often described as a kind of incarnation, the way that the buddhas show themselves in the world, manifesting as Buddha Shakyamuni and these great Tibetan incarnate lamas and so on. But here he's saying everything is the nirmanakaya. The way the car is being driven, the glistening road after the rain, the lost and hungry young men, hanging out on the street corner. Whatever you see is the radiance of the buddha mind manifesting. So we don't turn away. We don't merge into it, but we're here. We're receiving everything and we're able to respond. And by practising in this way, we become more immediate, more intuitive, more spontaneous. And that's because every moment of your life is preparation. It's both nourishment and presence, but it's also preparing you for more and more. And because you're there, everything stays with you. Not being

overwhelmed, but you're just filled with the world.

So when you come to work with other people, everything can pour through you. If you talk with a friend who's dying, you find something to say. Playing with a small child, you find a way to do it. Because we have access to all the richness we have seen. Most of the time in our ego selves, we are very under-ressourced. We reject so much of the world and then we don't have so much available. Ok, so, if in the evening you have some time, you can do some more practise and we meet together tomorrow morning for the final session, in which we'll be looking at meditation problems. Have a good evening.

So we start with some practise. We can do the guru yoga with the three A and then just sit with whatever occurs.

Relaxing into the natural state in all situations is the way to fulfill the welfare of all beings

So, in general in Mahayana Buddhism we begin by taking refuge and reciting the bodhisattva commitment and at the end we dedicate the merit. Sometimes and in some places we do more formal recitation of these things. But actually they're implicit in the practise. When you relax into the openness of your original nature, this is taking refuge in the buddha. As Chetsangpa set out yesterday, that state contains the three kayas - the three bodies of the buddha, and so complete refuge is there. Moreover, the mind, when it's open, has no limits to it. It includes all phenomena, all beings. And so the welfare of others is not an optional kind of extra, it's contained within the practise. All beings are the domain of our own mind, or are within the mandala of the buddha's mind. And since everything which arises is self-liberating, there are no accumulations to be distributed. Because everything is already shared by being co-emergent in the same moment. So, it's not as if there's contradiction between the different styles of practise, we can just recognise how in some practices there are very elaborated forms that set everything out in detail and other practices are very unelaborated. Non-duality means that there's nothing private or secret hidden away. Separation arises when we enter into the domain of ignorance. So relaxing into the state again and again and maintaining it in the morning, in the evening and in all situations is the way to fulfill the welfare of all beings.

You can spend a lot of time doing meditation practise, but miss the central point

So then he continues with the last section "Advice on practise for great meditators. Om Mani Padme Hung Hri" and then the lama speaks again: "You male and female great meditators in mountain retreats for fixed periods of years, think for a moment about what I, a beggar, have to say."

He's speaking here because you can spend a lot of time doing meditation practise, but miss the central point. So, even these great practitioners who live in caves and are doing many, many hours of practise every day, if that practise is not grounded in emptiness, it's very difficult to make real progress. Because the real progress is to realise that there is no progress. This is already set out in the heart sutra. But because of our desire to have change and progress, we maintain ourselves in the realm of cause and effect.

Eradicating the root of suffering

So, he says: "Up until now we have all been revolving around the great ocean that is samsara. For a long time we have experienced very intense suffering and have wandered around through the six realms, one by one. In this way we have had to undergo unimaginable sufferings of birth and death.

The reason for all this is, that we have not understood the nature of our own awareness due to ignorance.” It’s obvious, that there is a great deal of suffering in the world. And there are many organisations, official ones, government organisations, charities, that try to help. In the traditional example, if you have a tree and you want to get rid of it, you can start to pull off the leaves one by one. This takes a long time. By the time you’ve taken the leaves off the first side and then you go to the other side, they’re already starting to grow back on the first side. So you can cut the small branches and then the big branches, cut the trunk. But even if you cut the trunk, little new shoots will come up between the bark and the first layer of wood. So the most important thing is to cut the root. If you cut the root, the tree dies. The root of all suffering is ignorance.

Picking the leaves off the tree of samsara never ends

You can focus on changing the patterns of your own mind and in the abhidharma of buddhist philosophy or understanding there are many descriptions of components that generate either pleasure or pain. So you can focus on developing your love and compassion and reducing your selfishness and anger. But new situations arise, which provoke us and the work never ends. This is the problem with samsara. Samsara is the flow of experience. There is no end to the flow of experience. The mind and all experience is described as being unborn and unceasing. It’s unborn, so there’s nothing happening and yet, the flow of illusory experience never ends. That’s why the texts say, there’s no end to samsara. Samsara is not a place or a constructed building that you could take to pieces. It arises as the misunderstanding, the deluded interpretation of the status or nature of the flow of experience. So, there are endless problems that people have. And there are endless charities that deal with blindness in Africa and children born with hairlips. These are clearly good activities and worthy of support. They operate as taking the leaves off the tree. Because the one definite thing about our life is, that it’s going to end.

Birth and death are moving within the field of the unborn

Death is what we’re born with. So, we’ve got to die somehow. So every now and then, to help this process along, some new disorder arises, like HIV or ebola and so on. New diseases can manifest very quickly. So there has to be some cause for death. So helping people who have a disorder is very good, but it’s not dealing with the root problem. When someone says ‘I am suffering’, we feel we want to help them. If the person has the capacity of really being helped, then the beginning of helping begins with the question ‘Who is the one that’s suffering?’. I am suffering. But who is this I? What is this subjectivity? What is the mind that suffers? Understanding the mind is the way to bring an end to suffering, because through understanding the mind, the fantastic samsaric constructs come to an end. For example ‘I’m getting old’. ‘I’m getting fat’. The mind itself is not old or fat. The mind has no qualities like that. So if I can find the mind and settle in my mind, all the problems of old age, sickness and death are solved. But this body is like a very fast car being driven by a drunk driver. It’s going to smash into a wall at a certain point. When we get up in the morning we plan various journeys through the day, but the main journey we’re on is the journey to death.

The point that is the door to liberation

But who is it who dies? When we look at the mind itself, we encounter the unborn openness of awareness. We also encounter the fact that the contents of our experience are changing all the time. That they are born and then they die. Birth and death are moving within the field of the unborn. The mind, our state of awareness, doesn’t die. But our personality will collapse, our body will collapse, our memories will vanish. When we come to the point of death our five elements will start to

dissolve and then there is open space. So this is what he's saying here. The reason for all of samsara is just this one point of understanding our own mind. And therefore that should be the central focus of our practise. Because that is the door to liberation.

The richness of the buddhist tradition can cause confusion

“In order to now realise the nature of awareness, you must practise the holy dharma. It is said that there are an inconceivable number of sutras, tantras and commentaries in the holy dharma. The teachings of the buddha are vast. There are many different sources and references and the means of entry into the dharma through all the different texts is inexhaustible.” The very richness of the buddhist tradition can create a lot of confusion. There are styles of buddhism established in different countries. Inside these countries there are different schools. Inside these schools there are different lineages, coming from different teachers. Different teachers have different ways of explaining things. How will I know what is right? Dingdong Rinpoche is going to Kailash. If we go to Kailash with him, we'll get a great blessing. But Pingpong Rinpoche is going to Bodhgaya. In Bodhgaya he's going to burn a lot of butterlamps and we will get a lot of merit. What should I do? You can spend a lot of time wondering what to do.

But then he continues: “But we who are called great meditators, have no need of many different dharmas. What we need is the definite awakening to our own awareness, which is the essence of all dharma. If you have this definite awakening then the meaning of all dharmas is encompassed within it. For the roar of the buddha arises from your awareness.” So this is really the central point.

Through studying a text like this, we get some more sense of the geography of the mind and then, through sitting in meditation, we wander through our mind and we allow the movement of the mind to wander through the space of the mind. Through that we come to settle in ourselves.

letting go of the habit of separation and fragmentation

So then he says: “This is how to go about getting that actualisation. Start by developing the bodhicitta by abiding in the nature of the view of Samantabhadra in order to benefit all sentient beings, as many as would equal the extent of the sky. This is the bodhicitta which doesn't take an object. In Tibetan it's called *migmed ninje* and it means that compassion arises in relation to sentient beings who manifest in the manner of a dream. All of these dreamlike beings are contained within the mind of Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha who is always present in our heart in the form of a letter A. So whenever we practise all beings are with us. This is vital to understand: that the actuality of the world is the inclusion of all. The fantasy of samsara is individualisation, separation, liking and not liking. So as we've looked, the issue is not about unification as an active process, but about letting go of the habit of separation and fragmentation. So, relaxing into the openness of the mind is the benefit of all beings.

No thought or feeling will add or rob me of something of significance

Meditate clearly on the guru yoga, praying with deep inward devotion. Take the four initiations and let the guru melt into you and remain in the state of the merging with his mind into yours. That more tantric form is described in the early part of the text. When we do the three A practise it's the same principle. In which the mind of the guru, which includes all the buddhas, is present in front of you as a white letter A. And your open potentiality is present in you as a letter A. And when we

make the sound of the letter A three times, the non-duality or non-separation of these two As are as one A and there is just open space.

So having opened up into that natural situation, he says: “don’t recollect or follow the habits of past desires.” That is to say, when you remember something you did yesterday evening, or what you did last summer, some thought arises. Leave it alone. Releasing the tendency to involvement, by relaxation is done by relaxing. For some people this is easier, for some people it’s more difficult. But by entering the practise again and again, I realise that, when I’m relaxed, I don’t need anything. There is no thought or no feeling which will add something of significance. There is no thought or feeling or memory that could arise and rob me of this situation. Awareness is very patient. This is why we use this image of the mirror again and again. The mirror tolerates within it whatever reflections arise. A mirror doesn’t alter the reflection. Same way by relaxing, we become more tolerant and allow whatever is occurring to be there.

After some time, the subtle tendencies become thinner and thinner

So when the text says ‘don’t recollect or follow’, we could read that, as if that it’s an instruction, that that’s something we should do. And at first it might have to be a bit effortful. So, if you’ve been smoking cigarettes and you decide to stop, at first you don’t want to see other people smoking cigarettes because it creates a link with your habit. You smell cigarette smoke and it evokes a desire to have more of that. If you’re at a party you have to consciously resist the temptation to have a cigarette. Alcohol, cigarette, alcohol, cigarette, two best friends. But now, no cigarette. And then after some time, the subtle tendencies for smoking become thinner and thinner and thinner. You look at a packet of cigarettes – oh, I used to smoke. The bridge or the pathway between you and the cigarette have dissolved. Now when you were born you were not smoking cigarettes. Cigarette smoking is adventitious behaviour. It commences. It has a start due to causes and circumstances.

The risk of replacing the striving

As we looked at in some detail, the arising of ignorance is the same. The mind’s original nature is free of ignorance and delusion. Due to causes and conditions, some wobble arises and the mind starts to produce more and more thoughts, arising in the manner of duality. So by now it feels completely normal and natural to be caught up in thinking. Just as for a smoker, the first thing you do in the morning is light a cigarette. Your body moves towards the cigarettes. This is what I do. When we sit in the meditation, we find that our attention moves towards the thoughts. That’s what we do. But this is artificial. This is a pattern of behaviour which has been developed and has become habitual, but it’s not intrinsic, it’s not there of itself. It has to be created. So at first, because our habit formation is very intense, it’s as if we have to make conscious effort not to go after these thoughts. But if you stay with conscious striving for too long, you create a secondary kind of problem, if you replace the striving to be lost - to enter into habit formations, with the striving to resist habit formations. And you move from the habit of abandoning yourself to whatever is arising, to the habit of trying to resist to abandon yourself to whatever is arising. And the danger of this is, that your attention is still with whatever is arising. But what Chetsangpa has been explaining again and again is that the central point is the ground. It’s the basis, the open emptiness of the mind and you won’t open yourself to that, if you keep fixating on the patterns of experience, which are arising. So this relaxing, not doing, not giving ourselves, is to be done very gently.

In the vibrant present there is no past and future

He says: “Don’t give rise to thoughts that explore the future.” This doesn’t mean suppressing the

thoughts, or trying to cut them off as soon as they arise. But by relaxing and opening we are present now. In the vibrant present there is no past and future. And so relaxing into the present is itself the way to not giving rise to thoughts about the future.

The less we interfere the more activity arises effortlessly

“Here, in the present moment, let go of the notion of an active subject and of deeds to be done.” This is very hard, because my whole identity is based on the fact that I can do things. When we get sick and are in bed we are incapacitated. We lose our capacity to manifest our energy in the usual way. Our ordinary sense of self reveals itself through our active participation in the world. But what he’s saying is, that that whole nexus of mobilising energy of intentionality is a habit formation. It feels intrinsic, but actually it’s a delusion. Because it’s described how the primordial nature is purity, *kadag* and this open purity shows itself as the shimmering aliveness of the moment. This *lhundrub*, or effortless arising, is not created out of cause and effect. The less we interfere, the more we can see, that this is the case. That we are part of the flow of life and staying within the non-dual field, our activity arises effortlessly. And so you don’t need to have a strong sense of ‘I am the one who does things’ or ‘I need to work out what has to be done’. It arises and then it vanishes. And we can start to see this happens in our life. If you see someone who might have difficulty getting up from the floor, your hand goes out, because you have your connection, because you’re participating together. Energy flows freely within that shared field. And so we have less and less sense I am in here inside myself and therefore have to step out and do something. Life continues in a very efficient way. Things are done, bills are paid, but there is less and less sense that I am the one that’s doing it.

Avoid taking up a position

At the moment I’m talking. But I’m not doing talking. Talking arises out of connectivity. If you have to think about what you’re going to say, you know that you’re not in a conversation. When we’re wondering, ‘should I say this or not?’, we’re already in our isolation. So being part of the field allows the freeflow of energy and this is what he means. Because on an inner level the key thing is to avoid taking up a position. As we saw yesterday, that’s very easy. Your mind is a bit dull, a judgement arises about the dullness of the mind, so you feel I need to do something to change the dullness of my mind.

Without merging into what’s arising and without actively separating away from it, just be with what is arising. We are the space within which the thought is arising. When you’re stuck in your ego formation, it is as if a thought is coming to you, or flowing out of you. As soon as you’re in duality, you’re in location. You have the ten directions and things are up and down and sometimes thoughts seem to come in the back of your head, at times they seem to be on top of it and so on. These experiences arise because we seem to be somewhere, standing in relation to things that appear to be coming to us. So, the central instruction is always the same: relax and open and be present as the openness. That means don’t be present as a fixed consciousness checking out what’s going on.

There’s no other to approve or disapprove

“You must recognise your own awareness as the buddha’s understanding. Your own awareness is empty and without self-substance. It is free of all conceptual elaboration. It is innate clarity and understands itself by itself. It is clear and unpolluted.” (*aside*: That was just the beginning of the next paragraph.) I just missed out the “moreover” at the beginning. When he says it understands itself by itself, this means it’s not relying on thinking about what is happening. Understanding is not

the best word for this. It means, when you're sitting and you're here, the truth that you're here and open is intrinsic in the experience of being present. It's self-validating. Most of our life we are in need of validation. Children need a lot of validation. They say 'look mommy, look what I've done. Look at me, look what I'm doing, because they need the gaze of the other person as a kind of confirmation as a kind of value, oh, what is this? Your attention validates me. As we get older we learn to do this for ourselves. We have a flow of internal narrative which is giving us a sense of what we're doing. This can be focused on the future, 'on the way home I need to get some milk. Oh, I really like cooking.' These little commentarial thoughts give a sort of extra intensity or validity to what's occurring. But awareness is self-validating. As the text was saying, it's alone. It's infinite. There's no other to approve or disapprove. And yet, it's not anxious or uncertain or lonely, because the clarity of self-presence in the moment is self-proving or self-illuminating.

Thrownness

"It's free of the intellect's focus on objects and signs. Your true nature cannot be recognised as something." This is why psychotherapy will never lead to enlightenment." Talking about your patterns and the way you manifest, that can be useful, but it doesn't take you through the waterfall of conceptualisation into the open land of being. The ground of samsara and nirvana is the same, but the quality of the experience in these two modes is very different. Recognising that I am validating myself allows us to see our own falseness. The reason I seek to validate myself is because I suffer from ontological insecurity. I feel a bit fraudulent. I'm not sure if I'm living my life the way I should. I'm not sure what I should be doing. This is what in existential thought is described as the thrownness of existence.

When you're a child, you find yourself in a family. When you get a little bigger and more conscious, you go to visit other children in their families and you suddenly realise 'hey, their family is not like my family. Instead of what's happening in your family being reality, it's now 'why don't we do what they do? How come my friend's got a bedroom of his own and I have to share with my brother? Uhm, that's because that family is richer than us. So, why don't you earn more money so we can have a big house and I can have my own bedroom?

Chasing illusions, hoping to arrive somewhere, we'll never get to an end

So, now the child starts to have imagination, where you can imagine a world that's different from the one you're in. This imagination extends our world, but it also brings in a little shake. Because, if it could be different, that's because how it is, isn't good enough. Something's wrong. It has to be improved or changed, so we become more conscious of our disappointments. We've been doing this for a long time – trying to shore up the insecure situation that we find ourselves in. And this is why we become addicted to mental energy. Because the productivity of our mind seems to be the saving force which maintains some sort of continuity and integrity. So we want to exchange ontological insecurity for a security where we'll be sorted, where we know who we are, we know how to be. But he says: "Your true nature cannot be recognised as something." But, I want something. Yesterday it was very nice with the baby here. And this baby has found something. It's found its thumb. Straight in the mouth. That's the first something in life. But of course it's only a substitute for the good mamma's body.

So this orientation towards something.... we have to just observe ourselves in a very respectful and gentle manner and how we are always chasing these illusions and hoping to arrive somewhere. If we remain in the paradigm we'll never get to an end. There will always be more somethings to chase after. That's why he saying your mind is not a something. You won't find it as a something. So don't look for your mind in the style that you apply looking for something. Otherwise that style

of looking, will simply keep you deluded.

Mind is not a branded commodity

“The mind is untouched or unsullied by any of the good or bad aspects of the buddhas or sentient beings. It’s not affected by the faults or good qualities of knowing virtue and error.” So he’s making the point again that the mind is not a construct, so all the energy that’s put into constructing good and avoiding bad, won’t take you there. “It’s free of all the dharma titles such as dzogchen and mahamudra.” That is to say, it’s not a branded commodity. You can’t say that only by doing dzogchen will you find it. It is there from the very beginning. It’s not owned by anyone. Because it’s not a thing, nobody can give it to you. And because it’s not a thing, nobody can steal it from you.

No activity determines the nature or opens the pathway to our mind itself

“Good and bad, permanent and traceless, birth and destruction, moving and changing, binding and liberating, gaining and losing, hopes and doubts, accepting and rejecting, inhibiting and practise, regarding these and all others, in brief, the mind itself pays no regard to any of the attitudes and phenomena of samsara and nirvana and their middle path.” So, from that point of view, in terms of the practise, everything we know is useless.

When my mom got old she moved into a sheltered house and got rid of the old family home and she took quite a bit of her own furniture into this sheltered place. Then she needed more support, so she moved into another place where she had a much smaller room and had to leave almost all her furniture. And then towards the end, the main thing she did was just sit in a chair. She said `all I need is my chair`. She said `I don’t need shoes, because I’m not going out.` So this was someone who had run a house, cooking and doing all sorts of things and her world getting very, very small. All the knowledge which she had about how to do things, was irrelevant. She didn’t even make a cup of tea for herself.

The form of her life was gradually dissolving. She was still there, very bright eyes. Her main occupation was looking out the window at the birds. All her life she liked birds, particularly blackbirds. They were very friendly blackbirds. When I was young, we had one in the backyard and it would come and eat cheese from her hand. And in the end she was just waiting for the blackbird. Everything we have will dissolve. We are so busy, pursuing all our plans and intentions because they seem so meaningful and they are meaningful contextually. But they have no intrinsic value. The context changes and they’re no longer fitting. None of this activity determines the nature or opens the pathway to our mind itself. Again, this is his encouragement to open up into the practise.

I thought I was making my life, but it was an obscuration to the ground of my life

He says: ”The nature of your own mind, your awareness, depends on nothing whatsoever. It’s not mixed with anything, it’s not touched by anything, it’s not contaminated by anything whatsoever. It has no preferences, it has no bias.” If you want to enter into the practise, it’s very helpful to read a passage like this again and again and again. It’s quite troubling.

At first it doesn’t make any sense. Then you start to see, the implications of this are, that all my busy-ness, all my distraction is indeed an obscuration. I thought I was making my life, but what I was making was obscuration to the ground of my life. Oh, so when I sit in the practise and my mind wanders off, it’s leading me astray. Not because I’m doing something I shouldn’t be doing. It’s not wrong because of any rule or prohibition, it’s just, that I won’t find it if I’m looking in the wrong

place.

There's a story of Mullah Nasruddin. One night a friend of his went by and he saw the Mullah down in the ground poking about in a pool of light that was shed from a lamp coming from a window in a nearby house. And the friend said 'Mullah, what are you doing?' He said 'looking for my keys.' The friend said 'oh, I'll help you, we'll soon find them. So they looked around and around and around. After ten minutes the friend says 'Mullah, I don't think they're here. And Mullah said 'Yeah, I know they're not here. I dropped them over there where it's very dark and you can't see anything. So, I'm looking where the light is.

This is what we do in the meditation. We look for our mind in the thoughts and feelings and so on that arise. That's not where it is. So we have to look in the dark and learn to look in the dark. We're not going to find something. We're going to profoundly be ourselves.

So this is a big transformation. It means a return to the original mode, to how it's been from the very beginning. And that doesn't require our effort, but it is made much easier when we avoid interfering. Okay, if we take a short break for 15 Minutes and then we'll conclude the text.

Letting the sensation of need just dissolve

"The actual nature of one's own awareness is very clear, sharp, shining and naked. This is the view of the buddhas. Its nature is empty, its radiance is clear and its manifestation is all pervading. Firstly, one must recognise one's own nature and then one must remain in one's own place. Finally one must become unchanging in this state."

In this last bit, one must recognise one's own mind, one's own awareness, we don't have a vocabulary that can really describe this. When we go out we can recognise our own shoes. Because it's a re-cognition. We already have a recognition of what our shoes looks like. But here we're not talking about knowing something via cognition. This is why it's more like being. We settle into that situation. We open by letting go and by doing this again and again, we find ourself in a state of openness.

We haven't made ourselves open. Like buying some new shoes and they don't quite fit, so you take them to the cobbler and they put them on a stretcher, so they're not too tight on your feet. So, it's not that we're opening ourselves. We're letting go of closure. The closure is the artifice.

How do we let go? How do you stop smoking? You leave the packet there. You want to have a cigarette, but you don't. There will always be cigarettes available in this world. All we can do is drop our sense that we are a smoker. So when the thought arises, often linked with a feeling or a sensation, 'oh, I need a fag, you have to let that just dissolve. This thought that once told the truth about me, because I was smoking, is now no longer telling the truth about me. It would mislead me. So now this thought leads from being friend, more like being enemy.

Leaving no forwarding address

Some people struggle to get rid of the thought. But it's usually easiest if you see, that it's irrelevant. Doesn't apply to me. So this is what we're doing in the practise. This movement of thoughts and feelings that we usually get involved in and caught up in, they don't apply. We've changed our address, we've left no forwarding address, so the postman can't do anything with the letter. The thought has nothing to do with you anymore. So, I don't need to be worried. The fact that you've left your cigarettes on the table, doesn't disturb me. The cigarettes are within arm's reach, but they could be a 100 km away. Nothing to do with me. So that's what he means with this middle stage: "Then one must remain in one's own place." And this is like Garab Dorje's second and third points, where having had some exposure to the actual situation of your mind, you can then put that into question, by inserting thoughts and wondering, if this is really how it is, or by thinking: 'oh, maybe

I need to do some Tai Chi just to support this. So it's by settling into the openness, that we have the sense that this is enough. The texts often use the word *simpa* (spelling?), which means satisfied. you've had enough food and somebody says 'would you like some more?' and you say, 'no, I'm fine'. What I've had is sufficient. I know that there are many other things, but what I've had was sufficient. And the more one eases into that state, the less power these other options have over us and we are distracted less and less and because of that we settle into this enduring openness, which is offering hospitality to all the various modes of life.

What is vulnerable is our capacity to relax

Then he says: "Great meditators, male and female, when you gain the certainty of opening to awareness, then you see how it is. Then you should protect it." We're not protecting it because the mind itself is vulnerable. The mind is vajra, indestructible. But what is vulnerable, is our capacity to relax. We live in states of agitation. We overstimulate our mind with electronic devices. We go down the streets, there are adverts everywhere, traffic lights, people driving badly and so on. There's a lot of agitation in the life in the city. He's speaking to people who live in caves in Tibet. Not much going on there, but enough to get lost. So for us, that's an encouragement to think 'am I overexciting my life?' To participate in the world as it is, we need to stay with some degree of rhythmic attunement. But how many times a day do you need to check your emails? There are many books you could read, many films to see, music to listen to, but do you need it? But I like it. What does it provide you with? It makes me feel better. So this is a dualistic adjustment that you're making to your state. As long as you know what you're doing, that's fine, but it's not dzogchen.

Our connection with space is still tentative in the beginning

We often seek entertainment because it's difficult to be with ourselves. When these people were living in caves with very little food, they didn't have much for changing their mood. But they could keep busy, with prostrations and polishing their butterlamps and so on. When I was doing a retreat in India, I would sometimes be so in need of something new, that I would take the sweetspacket that I had, these hard Indian sweets that I used every day in my offerings and I'd empty the packet out on the floor, put all the green ones together and the red ones together.

We crave distraction and this is something that we all have to learn to sit with and not indulge. The traditional example for this is, that it's like drinking salt water. If you're thirsty and the only water you can drink is the salt water from the sea, it gives you a momentary relief, but the salt will you make you more thirsty. So pursuing entertainment and distraction and diversion is tempting, but not helpful. It's not banned.

We're not to avoid it because it's bad, but simply that it's an energetic patterning that starts to become automated, it starts to take on a life of its own and then we want more of it and more, like children playing computer games. So, if the central focus is relaxing into openness, anything which arouses us into mobilisation and dualistic engagement is moving in another direction. And it's for that reason, that we need to protect the space of opening. What we're actually doing is protecting our beginner's connection to the space of opening. The space is not fragile, it's our connection with it that's still tentative.

We're not hacking our way through to our ground nature

"Without sinking or covering and without disturbance or distraction, clearly maintain awareness free of intellectualisation. Comfortably and evenly maintain awareness free of thoughts." So this

comfortably is quite important. It means tenderly, gently. This is not something that can be forced. We're not on a hero's journey. This is not a quest, where we're hacking our way through the forest. But rather, we're learning to collaborate with our own ground nature. The more we open to the openness, the more we find, that openness spreads out and pervades the moment of our day.

Be open and present and fully allow the experience to be there and see what happens

“With empty clarity maintain awareness free of entities. Directly maintain awareness free of grasping. Clearly maintain awareness without a root. Clearly maintain awareness free of obscuration. Naturally maintain awareness free of artifice.” So again with this word `maintain`, we have to see, it's not maintained in active mode. It's maintained through not coming to distraction. So for example “clearly maintain awareness without a root” sitting with our mind open and then we might have a sense of self, maybe located in our head, a pattern of sensations which seems to be saying `this is me, this is where I'm located. We seem to root our sense of self in this position and then we observe from this position. So in order to maintain awareness without a root, all we have to do is recognise that, this is what is occurring and be present with it. And then this pattern of sensation which appears in its insistence to be enduring and truthful, fades and vanishes and something else is arising. Uh, that little weird sensation was trying to cheat me. It was an imposter. It presents itself as me and then it's gone. There was nothing to be rooted in. So, whenever we feel, that we abide someplace or this is the mind, it seems to be an image, a sound, whatever it is that seems to give us some definite place, don't try to shift and change it. Just be open and present and fully allow this experience to be there and see what happens.

This instruction is enough

Great meditators, do not patch this with any other dharma, do not mix it with any other dharmas, for this awareness stands alone. It has no companion, no friend. It is naked. So keep it steadily and peacefully by itself. In this book *Simply Being*, there are several texts that say the same thing: this instruction is enough. If you do this, this is enough. There are of course so many other things we could do. But, as he says, your mind doesn't need improving. It doesn't need developing. It is your mind, why are you not hanging out with it. This is the central point. What will you find by looking here and looking there? What you will find is experience. There is nothing wrong with experience. Experience is what emerges from the open, empty mind. But if you tilt towards it, as if it was something, something in itself, something you needed, this will in itself take you away from the mind. So this is enough. Don't do anything else.

What you see is shape and colour

It says: “The appearance of the objects of the six senses will arise from that state. But no matter what appearances arise, towards their appearance, their emptiness and their clarity remain free of grasping. Don't put appearances outside.” means outside your body. “Don't keep awareness inside. Appearance and awareness are inseparable in the direct clarity that is free of inside and outside. All that we see here, and see here means experience through the senses, all that is experience is simply experience. It is the clarity of the mind. The mind shows itself as this experience. So, when I have a glass of water in my hand, this is the clarity of the mind. If your mind had no clarity there would be no illumination of the object. What you see is shape and colour. What you imagine is a glass.

Resting inside the concept as the purveyor of truth is the way to get lost

What you conceptualise is a glass. But what is actually here is the clarity of the mind. Your mind shows something. That is the field of emergence. Then running through that field is a stream of concepts. This is a glass. Its saying that it's a glass, is an imaginal act. Imagination is linked with images. We have an image of the glass. What's in my hand corresponds to that image and we identify 'oh, that's a glass'. That is a stream of mental energy, mental activity, creating a temporary conclusion. That is what is going on. We may feel in a real sense that there is some individual object in my hand. But that is the conclusion that we arrive at, when we rest inside concepts as the purveyors of truth. So we've covered this before, but it's such an important issue. I think that I see, I'm sure that I see a glass that is there in my hand. The glass is outside, it's an appearance on the outside and inside is my mind on the basis of which I say 'this is a glass.'. This is the way you get lost.

An act of creation

You yourself are telling yourself this is a glass. This is an act of creation. The movement of the mind creates the world. However, we feel that we are describing a world that already exists in itself out there. This is the delusion of duality.

Objects have a set of qualities which manifest relative to other things

However, of course, it doesn't mean that everything is just an idea. If I walk out into the road without looking, a car might hit me and if it does, I will be hurt. The shapes and patterns of the world have their integrity as shapes and patterns. And they have a set of qualities which manifest relative to other things. It would be hard for me to break the table with my hand, but if I had a saw in my hand I could cut it up without much difficulty. The wood is hard in relation to my hand, but it's not so hard in relation to a saw. Because we've become so habituated to our human embodiment and we take this as the site of truth, we see everything in the world in relation to our own embodied situation. So like in India you can see the street dogs eat shit. The first time you see the dog, someone's just had a shit at the side of the road and the dog comes along and you see his tail is wagging and he's eating the hot shit. We think this is disgusting. But if you were to interview the dog, he'd say 'no, it's breakfast!' The seemingly same object reveals different qualities to different ways of engaging.

Maintain the self-arising, self-liberating directness free of grasping

"All the thoughts that arise within, whether good or bad, subtle or gross, however they arise, they are the the unimpeded, natural awareness. So, don't look for faults, don't accept or reject. Maintain the self-arising, self-liberating directness free of grasping. Maintain the simultaneity of arising and liberating." So, to give an example as it were from the outside, but the same applies inside. What we call the glass is the clarity of our mind, something is being illuminated, something is being shown and presented. This is first, this is emergent. Onto that you can have your judgements and evaluations. The fact that it's emergent from emptiness means that there is no real noun there, so all your adjectives and adverbs have nothing really to hold on to. So that's the same with all seemingly direct mental experiences of thought, feeling and so on. In their emergence they are the clarity of mind, they are it's radiance it's showing and then we run an interpretative story line across them and that's the point of judging right, wrong, good, bad and so on.

Trust open awareness like a cornucopia or a wish fulfilling gem

“No matter what kind of activity you are doing, act without thinking, easily and spontaneously.” Now that’s not what your mother told you. ‘For god’s sake think about what you’re doing! So, it means trust! Trust being present in the freshness of the situation. We need to make a differentiation between an impulse, which is a well developed habit being suddenly mobilised into a situation, and spontaneity, which is the emergence within the field, and something else. Spontaneity is fresh and fitting. Impulses are always something I prepared earlier. Which is why people who are terribly impulsive are incredibly annoying. Because they’re very disruptive. Because an impulse coming from the past into the present is an act of violence. Whereas spontaneous behaviour is a field phenomena and generated out of the connectivity of the field and so it is appropriate. So what he’s meaning is, when you do it without thinking, don’t be inside yourself and then prepare something and bring it out. In group therapy when members of the group are very anxious, you can see them cogitating, running their thoughts around inside their head. Trying to work out what would be the right thing to say. And by the time they get to speak, they’re talking about something that the group has moved on from. They’re not in the shared flow of the group experience, but they arrive in this rippling pond like a lump of ice. It’s about trusting the natural fecundity of open awareness. Like a cornucopia, like a wish-fulfilling gem it will provide what is required.

There is no internal definition to any phenomena formed around some, private, internal essence

“Without grasping, stay loose and free. Without fixing on any object, keep flowing. Unborn, flowing, flowing. Unceasing, flowing, flowing. Stay relaxed with the understanding of the lack of inherent self-nature in all things.” We alienate ourselves from the flow of life by self-pre-occupation, by anxiety, by worry about what other people think and so on. Wanting to be successful, trying to impress other people, all of these bring an artifice into the interaction. When someone is relaxed and at ease, you’re immediately in an intimacy with them. So, it says, there’s no internal definition to any phenomena formed around some, private, internal essence. They are the movement of the co-emergent field of experience and so stay relaxed and flow within that.

Instant awareness is the great destroyer of confusion

“Yogis who practise this instant awareness have few needs. Although there is much dharma activity that can be practised, it does not bring one to awareness. So, stop dharma activities and then the instant awareness becomes very easy. This instant awareness is very dangerous for samsara. It chops up samsara. It is the great destroyer of confusion. It quickly goes to buddhahood and it speedily accomplishes the benefit of oneself and all others. He’s saying in many different ways, this one point is enough. All the many problems that arise come from the ignorance of not being present in instant awareness. When you die, let your breath stop in the state of the natural clarity of awareness and merge your awareness inseparably with the natural mode dharmakaya Samantabhadra. In one life you will gain buddhahood in the natural mode, the dharmakaya.

How to prepare for death

So we make a big division between life and death. People think ‘oh, how can I prepare for death?’ The best preparation is to ease yourself again and again into the open awareness. If you come to the point of death, if it happens suddenly in an accident, you won’t have been present. If it happens slowly, you can observe the beginning of the dissolving of the elements. When we practise and find

that our mind is very dull, we just stay with the dullness, stay open to the dullness. This is a great preparation for death. Very often people have physical pain as they die. But we've got used to sitting with whatever comes. We're sitting with I'm dying. Nothing to think about. Let's see what it is. Oh, this is happening, this is happening. We're present with it. We get frightened of things when we start thinking about them. But we know from our sitting practise that all experiences are impermanent. This is unpleasant and it goes. This is strange and it goes. Whatever happens, stay relaxed and open. Because once you go into a conceptual response to the situation. You end up with a lot of hopes and fears and this judgement and commentary separates you from the intimacy of the moment. As the elements dissolve, this final point of consciousness dissolves into space. Then there's nothing.

We are lucky because we know nothing is better than something

We're very used to nothing. These people who spent their whole life looking for something, get a bit of a shock. Because they think something is better than nothing. But we are the lucky people because we know nothing is better than something. And now we get the big nothing. It's wonderful. So that's how we move toward death. And of course that big nothing is called the *cho nyid bardo*, the bardo of the actuality of phenomena, this is the mind of all the buddhas. And if you fully relax into that, you achieve liberation in the dharmakaya.

To work for the benefit of all sentient beings is to relax into the open nature of the mind

"In one life you will gain buddhahood in the dharmakaya. For the sake of others take on the activity of helping beings as was done by Samantabhadra." So, again this is a kind of radical re-framing. To work for the benefit of all sentient beings, is to relax into the open nature of the mind. When I was younger and was travelling in India, I was fortunate to meet many of the great lamas of that time, like the 16th Karmapa, Dudjom Rinpoche and Chatral Rinpoche and so on. These were all people with lots of activity going on all around them, but they themselves were very peaceful. They were not busily rushing around, trying to make things happen. Like this still point in the hub of the wheel, they were open and them.

Be present and allow free movement around

When we think of Padmasambhava, he's sitting in meditation, he's quite relaxed and it's saying *Khordu Kandro Mang Po Khor*, around him are many dakinis, sky-faring energy forces performing all kinds of activities, but he's sitting very peacefully. The dharmakaya, the mind of the buddha, is for ourselves. This is what we get. We get enlightenment. What manifests from that is Sambhogakaya, and the Nirmanakaya is for others. Without the dharmakaya moving, these form kayas manifest effortlessly. So when it says 'acting for the benefit of others, it doesn't mean a lot of intention and work. It means from the state of open relaxation, allowing the unimpeded movement of the energy of connectivity.

Colophon

"Knowing this essential point, you must be diligent solely in the practise of awareness. Life is easily spent in distraction, so it is vital to remain free of distraction. That is what I have to say." That's pretty obvious. "This instruction, if practised by fortunate people, will certainly bring enlightenment in one lifetime." Then there is the colophon: "This preliminary practise, called the quick path to enlightenment, by which all beings can gain buddhahood in one lifetime, was composed by Buddha

Shri. It was printed by Sung Drol Chin(spelling?) and through its virtue, may all beings gain buddhahood. So this is a practise you can do again and again. You can read the text again and again.

Prayer of dedication, acknowledgement and lineage

We dedicate the merit to all sentient beings. Imagine rainbow lights coming out of your heart and filling all the dimensions and touching the heart of all beings

And so we come to the end of our time together. As we know very well meeting and parting is the nature of life. Whether we meet again in person we will never know. It could be, it could not be, but I deeply believe that we meet every time that we do the practise. The connections that are formed through doing practise together are very deep. It's also important to remember, if life gets difficult and you feel cut off and insecure, entering the practise you are in a field with those who have genuine concern for you. So, I'd like to thank Robert for this translation. Robert and I have worked together over many years and it's always very pleasurable, because I don't have to think about him. He's just extremely trustworthy. In my life this has been a fairly rare experience. And I'd like to thank the organisers , there are many tasks, the bookshop, the making of the tea. Everything runs very smoothly and this is because of this courteous and invisible activity. It's very sweet. And I'd like to thank you all for the very close attention that you bring to our time together. And that of course feeds into the field in which teaching is possible.

When I was first working on the text with C.R. Lama , I was sitting in the back compound of the little house in Shantiniketan. And I would prepare the text by writing the meaning of all the words down and then he would explain things. He believed that this was a very important text. And he said, it's exactly true what the text said. If you understand that, it's enough. So, in going through the text with you, I felt very connected with my teacher and so the lineage moves on.

So, good journey.

Transcription: Anna Aly Labana