

A
LITTLE LOOK
AT
FREEDOM



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CAUSALITY



One of the great gems of spiritual understanding that's come through the teaching of the Buddha is recognising the implications of impermanence: that everything is always changing. But even when impermanence is recognised something is usually overlooked. That something is the mechanism by which change comes about. What is it that drives impermanence? Why is it that things don't stay the same? On the surface the engine of impermanence is action. Yet action is also driven by something very simple. Something that we can call cause and effect or causality. Causality is the dynamic of change.

When we look closely at action it becomes obvious that every single action, whether it's twisting a hair or lifting a cup, is the consequence of prior actions, while it is also simultaneously the cause of future actions. All actions are simultaneously cause and effect, no matter which aspect of that dual nature is pertinent to the moment of our experiencing it from a practical perspective. Every impact is also an action; any cause is also an effect, simultaneously. But in a given moment we tend to be relating through one end, either the front or the back, more a cause or more an effect. Although within themselves both front and back are always equally present. So it's just a matter of our perspective, our relationship to what's happening. An action is always in itself simultaneously a cause and effect.

When you start to look out from an action through the 'chain of causation' you can see the same dynamic extending outwards, forward and backwards. What you are seeing is the dynamic of causality. But when you look closely you see that this is not a linear chain. It's a multi-dimensional web or matrix of causation. A matrix within which every node or hub is an action and every string or strut or line is the dynamic of causality extending causatively and effectively. Not just in one direction: each node extending out in an infinite number of directions. This whole notion of infinity is very, very difficult for the linear mind to grasp. Leibnitz, a mathematician and philosopher, proved mathematically that an infinity must have an infinite number of centres. This is a very interesting mathematical observation. A sphere has a centre but whatever the shape of infinity; any point within it is the centre. Any point at all, is the centre of

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infinity. This also is rather hard for us to grasp visually or conceptually.

This has a number of interesting implications. If this universe is infinite, then we are each the centre of the universe. So also is every blade of grass and every bomb. So if the universe is infinite, then it is turning around each one of us simultaneously. More precisely it is turning around our each and every action, each and every feeling, our each and every thought. When we look at the matrix of causality, the web of causation producing any action, we begin to see its endless indivisibility. You can keep on going in any direction that you can find as far as you're capable of going but you never actually reach a definitive end. This idea, if it is not fully understood, can create hubris. If it is understood it creates compassion, and empowered, responsible action.

So let's take Zoe biting her fingernails. You could say there's a trail of causation close to that action that might involve us. It involves her being in this room with us. But then it starts to go back out, and apparently leave us behind. It goes quickly out to the fact that she had the mother and the father that she had; and that they had the mother and father that they had; and that they had the mother and father that they had. This goes on and on and on back. At a certain point we each meet Zoe in that genealogical matrix. Somewhere along the line we all have ancestors in common. Whether they're human or not, whether all human beings have come from one stock or whether there were mutations from other forms in many aspects, it really doesn't matter. At a certain point there was the first protozoon and therein we all are inextricably joined.

The ongoing matrix of causation prior to that point is a causation we have in common with everything else on this planet. It's exactly the same for each of us. Included in that is the formation of this planet, the formation of this solar system, the formation of this spiral galaxy etc. As we go out and out this matrix gets bigger and bigger in space, and extends further and further in time. We don't ever come to a clear conceivable end to it in space or time. This is what I mean by infinite: not necessarily what Leibnitz means. By infinite I mean we cannot get to an end or a beginning of this causality. It doesn't mean there isn't one. It doesn't mean there wasn't one. It means that we can't locate it. So, as far as we're concerned there isn't one. The shape of Zoe's nose and the shape of Laura's nose, Cathy's nose, every nose in this room is different. Every nose in this

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room is unique. Every nose in the entire history of noses has been unique. And yet at a certain point their causation meets. The matrix of causality is infinite; it extends out in every direction. Zoe biting her fingernails is partly a function of her diet, and it's also a function of her sense of self. Both of which are inextricably linked with the way she's been treated by other human beings from the moment she was born. This is inextricably linked up with the way that they were treated by other human beings from the moment that they were born. Like this it extends out into space as well as into time infinitely.

If Julius Caesar had not crossed the Rubicon and if Alexander had not been great, things would not be as they are. Zoe would not exist if Caesar had not crossed the Rubicon. It's a little thing crossing a river. The Rubicon's not a very big river. Yet clatter across it he did, without permission from the senate, and the world changed dramatically. Little things like that have been happening in every space time moment since the beginning of time; shaping the world just as definitively as Caesar crossing the Rubicon. Even, believe it or not, the exact way in which Olivia is knitting with that wool. If Zoe's parents had not made love that day nine months or so before she was born and if Zoe's mother had not done that thing just at that moment that made her father come, just in that moment, Zoe would not have been born. Another sperm would have hit the egg. But Zoe was born, that sperm did hit the egg, her mother did that little party trick that she learnt from her secret lover the week before.

Within this infinite matrix, not one action that happened did not happen: obviously. Every single little twiddle, every single twitch and fart that happened, happened. Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon may have been a difficult one. After all it was the most dangerous thing that a Roman general could do: cross the Rubicon with soldiers at his back. Especially when he only had one legion and the senate had 25 not far away. It could well be that he was sitting on his horse and it got a bit jumpy and did a little buck and across the Rubicon they went! Who knows? The point is that no single action can be extracted from the total matrix without the matrix collapsing so totally that it evaporates into fantasy that it evaporates into pure speculation. What this means is that the matrix is an indivisible whole. It cannot be taken apart in any way. No part of it, however big or small, can be removed without reality collapsing into fantasy.

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So along with this indivisibility that rests upon inextricability come other factors that pertain to actions. Actions are not just cause and effect, they're not just inextricable. They're indispensable. They cannot be disposed of. They are absolutely required, just as they are, for the unfolding of the totality of the matrix. Each action is equally inextricable, indispensable, inevitable. Therefore the actions, every one, belong to the matrix more fully than they do to their instrument. There probably has been a dictator somewhere sometime who was able to say: "everything from the top of the mountain that you see before you belongs to me, every blade of grass, every hut, every horse, man, woman and child down there belongs to me". In the same way every single action, every single instrument of action belong to the totality of the matrix alone. The actions do not belong to the instruments, just as the serfs' turnips do not belong to the serfs just because they have grown them. They belong to the Lord sitting in his castle. All actions belong not to their instruments but to the totality of all actions. This means that all actions are at root impersonal. They don't belong to their instruments. It's not my action and your action, his action and her action. It's action coalescing through you and me, us and them. What it is is our action, an "our" that not only includes everyone, but everything also.

This is all good and well, this is all fascinating or not, seeing the subtle nature of action. But for seeing the subtle nature of action to become more than fascinating you need to see to the very hub of your very own actions. The unique thing about your actions, human actions is that so many of them are the consequence of us making choices, making decisions. When we look forward into the future, hoping to make it better than the past, it all comes down to us making the right decision. It all comes down to making the right choice. This is just what it is like to be human. You've constantly got to make the right decision or the right choice, or you will suffer the consequences of not getting what you want or not liking what you get. So the real hub of human action, your actions, is decision making, choice making or what you can call technically 'volition.' Volition is the hub of action. Clarifying the true nature of volition is the passkey to a compassionate and satisfying life, even if you're broke.

You can look at action so deeply that you see it clearly. Seeing its impersonal nature can give you a great deal of freedom. It can allow you to deeply relax about actions when you see that you are not their cause; when you see that causality resides within the total-

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ity of the matrix and you recognise that you not to blame. This is not so hard to see. This is not at all hard to recognise. But even when it's been recognised we are still faced with the need to make decisions everyday. We are faced therefore with the prospect of making the wrong decision that would lead to the wrong course of action or at least the wrong result. For freedom to come tumbling through that open door, the way in which decisions are made need to be clearly seen, as being the way in which so many human actions come about

Perhaps you know that nauseous tight unwelcome feeling when the consequences have not all come in yet, but your decision has been irrevocably taken. Actions are in place and rolling into the future and you're beginning to think that it was the wrong one, that you're going to lose it, him, her, that you're going to lose your grip on your life. You've had this feeling haven't you? You're human aren't you? Of course this feeling can be very intense or it can be subtle. It can be about major events or it can be about trivialities. When I was younger, 'heavy' was a jargon word amongst hippies, and of course 'heavy' had multiple meanings. One of them was really bad. You go round and knock on someone's door and say: 'Charlie got busted.' 'Oh heavy man!' Or heavy could also mean really intense or even really cool but when heavy means bad I think it's quite a good word. It feels really bad when everything's heavy inside. Now the opposite of heavy is light. It's nice to be light, that's what yoga's all about: becoming light. Being able to float up into a handstand and stay there as you cross your legs and come down onto your upper arms, slide effortlessly and gracefully to full lotus and come back up into another handstand. That's what it's all about isn't it? You do that every morning, i know!

You know what Krishna said to his mate Arjuna: 'Go forth to your fratricidal duty with a light heart!' Not with a heavy heart. This is about the most we can expect from life. We can't expect a freedom from battle of one kind or another. We can't expect a freedom from struggle, of one kind or another. We can't expect a freedom from difficulty, from confusion, from problems, from pain. But light heartedness in the midst of such trials and tribulations is possible to the extent that the illusory nature of volition is seen. To the extent that we see that that decision we made that is beginning to feel like a mistake was not made by us; seeing that it was made through our agency. That it was made through us: but not by us or even for us.

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This doesn't change its precarious nature. This doesn't mean that all of a sudden its consequences become palatable and tasty. It just means that all of that inner gut wrenching heaviness dissolves. Clarifying the illusory nature of volition is perhaps the most fruitful and rewarding thing that a human being can do. Clarifying the conditioned nature of action is cool enough. But clarifying the illusory nature of volition is to be right at the hub. Then you are removing the pebble in the axle that has been stopping the wheels of life from turning smoothly. This pebble is so small: volition. It's so easy to remove it. You only actually have to see clearly and unequivocally that it is an illusion. You are not the choice maker, you are not the decider. It's ok, it's really, really ok.

You are not the decider, you are not the chooser. No matter who wants to come up with any dissertation on responsibility as blame, you are not to blame. What is guilt but regret over decisions becoming particular actions and having specific consequences? Shame, regret are the same. Then flipped out to the outside, for actions done by others: scorn, resentment, blame. When we've made a decision and it's beginning to look seriously dodgy, that can really fuck you up. Maybe it looks like you're going to lose your children just for one fuck. Imagine what kind of a heaviness that could create. That's an internal heaviness but these other things: blame, resentment, these have an external movement. These are rocks that we hurl at each other. Externalising that heaviness and turning it into a weapon.

Deep in the heart of action is volition. Deep in the heart of volition is nothing to get hung up about, nothing to feel guilty about, nothing to blame anyone for, nothing to resent anything for, nothing to regret anything for. This is easy to understand, this is easy to remember in the cool abstraction of private thought. But it's remembering it in action that makes the difference. And what helps us to remember it in action is the pain that we experience when we forget it, the pain that blame is, the pain that shame is, the pain that guilt is, the pain that regret is, the pain that resentment is. If they're not resisted, if they're not denied, if they're not turned away from, these pains liberate us from their source. We don't want the pain but if we're not denying it or turning away from it, if we're acknowledging it and confronting it, if we're looking straight at it then we can see where it's coming from. It's coming from the illusion of volition and seeing that the pain just stops. The blame just stops, the guilt just stops, the shame just stops.



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CHOICE



I'd like to take a little look at what is implied by the phrase 'being human'. Of course 'being human' is a very multifaceted experience or phenomenon. But so many of the facets of being human we share with other phenomena. Many of them we even share with plants and animals, certainly with mammals and primates. And even though it's surely not possible to draw a clear line between this species and that and say 'here it ends and here it begins', there do seem to be certain characteristics that seem to be uniquely human in terms of their significance to being alive.

I'd like to suggest that at the heart of what makes being human something particular is a particular capacity. This capacity may well, and I'm sure does, exist in other forms of life, but not to the same degree. It doesn't make quite the same contribution to those life forms' existence. That capacity is making conscious choices. If the word 'choice' is qualified by the word 'conscious,' that implies that there is such a thing as unconscious choice. Some people would say this is not so; that choice is always conscious. But I'd like to use the word more widely and to say that, in a sense; a jelly fish moving away from whatever they move away from is a choice even though maybe it's an unconscious one. In any case we assume it to be unconscious. I don't want to make those distinctions: that the only choices are conscious ones and there is only one species that make them.

Prince Charles, as you may know, has a conscious relationship with his plants so that they will thrive better. Now you may laugh but it seems that it makes a difference. Whether this suggests consciousness in the sense of making conscious choices or not is, I suppose, a matter for debate and a matter of opinion. But I say that it's the role of conscious choice in our lives that most distinguishes human psychology from that of other forms of life, especially the amount of conscious choices that we make. Many of the choices that we once made consciously become unconscious and this is why I don't want to say that the only choices are conscious.

When you're first learning to drive a car, you're not 100% clear about the location of the three pedals on the floor and which thing

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they do. In the beginning you have to deliberately make sure that you put your foot on the right one in order to stay alive. So you're making conscious choices. But it doesn't take long before those choices become unconscious. The unconscious nature of those choices rests upon them originally being conscious. Somebody says: 'this pedal does that and this pedal does the other and you use pressure on this one under these circumstances and pressure on that one under those circumstances.'

You could say the ability to make conscious choices is what human beings have instead of having mainly instinctive behaviour; behaviour that is governed by instinct. But when our conscious choices become deeply embedded they begin to look like instincts. So for example if I start to fall over I instinctively broaden and lengthen my hand and this gives me balance. Those of you who are here next week will have the pleasure of meeting my youngest daughter who is totally obsessed with riding horses. I was sent some pictures of her not very long ago of her riding a horse without holding the reins. In order to keep balance her arms were extending into her fingers, and her palms were broadening. Nobody's told her to do this. This is the inherent integrity of her body still functioning instinctively.

It could be perhaps that making choices is really the essence of being human. It could also be that that's why Patanjali uses the word ishvara as the key word in the yoga sutras. As one possible root meaning of the word ish is to choose. So, in order to understand being human, in order to be fully comfortable with being human, the process of choice making needs to be clearly understood and recognised. When we are doing our yoga posture practice and we're being asked to make particular shapes and to enter them in particular ways you could say that we have to make lots of choices, conscious and unconscious. How strongly to do this, how far to do that, how much to do the other? These choices are being made through the interaction of many levels of our being: the interaction of many layers of the nervous system and many layers of what it means to be human.

When you learn to drive a car, for example, or when you learn to cut carrots effectively you start by being very conscious of what you're doing. And eventually it's done unconsciously. You can have a conversation while driving a car; you can have a conversation while cutting carrots and not cut your fingertip off most of the time.

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This is because the process has become unconscious and within that process you're constantly making judgements. You're selecting the right degree of pressure with which to engage the texture of the carrot with the knife and if you use a different knife you use a different degree of pressure and on a different carrot you use a different degree of pressure but you don't consciously talk to yourself about this. You're just feeling it through your wrists, thumb, fingers and forearm.

So I'm using the word choice very broadly, narrowing it somewhat by saying conscious choice. Ash asked me something the other day about choice and I deferred so I'm laying the ground for beginning to answer the question. But the process of choice making is pregnant with paradox. Everybody present on this platform, I hope anyway, is not present on this platform because they were coerced or bullied or somehow intimidated into being here. Because this is not likely to have been the case, one of the easy ways to point to what apparently was the case is to say that you all freely chose to come here. You not only freely chose to come to La Croce but to come to class this morning.

You could say that Chris and Pelle have made a choice not to be here right now. When you look at the choices that they had to make to not be here right now then a slightly different perspective starts to come into view. Neither Pelle nor Chris were threatened that they should leave here, they weren't forced to leave the platform. I'm not sure; I'm making some assumptions about Chris but not about Pelle. Pelle left the platform so that he could make our breakfast and I imagine that Chris left the platform to help him. At a certain point, each one of them chose to get up and go into the kitchen. Therefore you can easily say it was a free choice. But especially in this kind of situation, you could say that it might have been more comfortable for them to stay lying on their mat. It might not have been; of course we don't know for sure as they are not here to tell us. Or let's take the free choice that you made to come here this morning. You might well have been tired, you might have felt a little cold, you might have really wanted, if not to roll over and go back to sleep, at least to have a piping hot shower before you went out. And yet you still came out.

So in order to see clearly the true nature of choice making we need to be able to look at things that are very easy to see. They're not actually hidden even if they're not noticed. Which is: what is it

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that contributes to the making of a choice besides the decision to move, or to get up, or to leave a room and go outside onto a platform? Let's look at an action, even a simple action like that, or a simple action like taking a drink from a flask. I imagine that Paul didn't make a conscious decision to drink from his flask but sometimes we do make conscious decisions to do something like that. I'm including that kind of action, and what brings it about, under the implications of the word 'choose' or 'choice'. When I open my mouth like that, no differently from anybody else, and vibrate my vocal chords and make a particular shape with my mouth, it's very easy for people who are hearing to say: 'well he's chosen that word rather badly today' or 'he's choosing his words rather well today' or whatever.

But as you probably know, very rarely do you make a conscious choice about the words that come out of your mouth. Sometimes you do but most of the time you don't: they just come out of your mouth. Very often the words that come out of your mouth come out as a result of thoughts that are passing through your brain. Especially if you've sat in silent stillness and not tried to manipulate your mind into a special state, whether it be silence or superconsciousness, but just sat with the activity of your mind, becoming friendly and intimate with the activity of your mind. It must begin to dawn on you that perhaps the thoughts that go through your mind have a life of their own. However much you may be able to now and then shape that life, that flow a little bit.

Honest observation reveals eventually that you cannot choose the thought that will bring you out of silence. You cannot choose the thoughts that are running through your mind, the thoughts that are running through your mind producing words. But not only producing words; the thoughts running through your minds producing actions. You're lying in bed on Thursday 4th August 2005 and your thoughts are: 'oh it's a bit cold this morning; I'm going to go back to sleep.' Thoughts that you didn't invite, that are there because it's cold, because you didn't sleep well, or whatever. And then into your mind, thoughts that you don't invite like this might come: 'oh I'd better go to the platform; I've spent hundreds of euros to be here. I might as well get my money's worth.' And eventually you get up so you come. It seems like you've done so freely because nobody has actually put a gun to your head and driven you here.

But on close examination, such as we've already made of how thoughts come into your mind without so much as an invitation from

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you, this idea of freely choosing begins to look more and more spurious and dubious. And yet we're faced by conscious choices all the time. Every one of us always will be. So it's not really a question of saying: 'oh we don't make choices' but of finding out: what does it mean to make choices? How are these choices really made? This is the significance of the word, the terminology ishvarapranidarna.

Making choices. You may have heard such things as: 'You can choose to be well! You can choose to be healthy, happy, free.' Of course anybody who has heard such a statement is bound to say: 'Well I choose to be well. I choose to be happy, free.' You'd be crazy to deliberately choose otherwise. Of course you're going to choose to be happy, well and free. But making that choice doesn't necessarily make you happy, well or free. Now does it? Can we admit this? That telling ourselves that we are can be or should be happy or rich does not make us so. But of course if we get fed up enough we might just start to do something about it. But, as you know, doing something about getting rich or happy doesn't actually work for most people.

So we also need to understand not just what comes before a choice but what comes after a choice. I'll take myself as an example. I do occasionally eat chocolate but a few years ago I used to eat quite a lot of chocolate everyday. And of course the inherent integrity of my body was still functioning and every now and then it would produce a thought in my mind: 'You'd better stop this Godfrey!' And so I would make a choice: 'Yep! I'm going to stop eating chocolate.' The next day I was eating chocolate. There doesn't that often seem to be a correlation between a choice and its intended outcome. Sometimes there is but very often not.

'I'm going to be nicer to my husband/wife/employees.' 'I'm going to be more generous to the tramps on the street. These are the kinds of choices that people are constantly making and not experiencing them being fulfilled. So when you say you can choose to be free, or you must choose to be free/happy, this is definitely true if you just take choice to be a simple verbal process in the brain or in the mouth. 'Choose to be free.' 'I choose to be well/happy.' Anybody of course can do that. If they had any sense they would do that if there is any sense or belief that it might bring it about.

What I'm saying is that although there is some kind of relationship between what we do and the process of choosing, it's not nec-

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essarily what we've been led to believe. I don't mean that we've been misled by anyone or anything in a deliberate sense. I'm not sitting here thinking that we're in the middle of some conspiracy to subjugate us to the will of some hidden secret minority. It's just the impression we get. We get this impression that we make free choices all the time. We get this impression because of the cortex, because we have such sophisticated machinery inside our skull.

Because the cortex is so rich in its possibilities of association, and of simulation, the human cortex is richly imaginative. It can imagine all sorts of things that are not actually here. You can remember things, anticipate things, even totally invent things like J K Rowling, because of the human cortex. And of course this is a great gift. This is not inherently a burden. But like the knives that Pelle might be using right now, in order to make his job easier in the kitchen, that knife needs to be razor sharp. Therefore he could easily cut the tip of his finger off. Most cooks do eventually cut part of their hand off, if they're serious about cooking, a few times. So, just as that sharp knife can provide nourishment, it can also provide pain and suffering. Likewise the cortex.

If a cat finds itself in miserable circumstances, it leaves, it goes somewhere else. It doesn't sit there for weeks and months pondering whether it ought to, whether it would be the best and right thing, whether anybody would be upset with it or reject or misunderstand it. It just gets the fuck out of there and finds somewhere it can be warm and get some food. But human beings, because of their cortex, can't behave with such freedom as a cat because we can imagine all kinds of consequences of all kinds of possible course of actions. So you can lie on your bed on Thursday morning, 4th August, and you can imagine: 'If I don't go to class, they'll all talk about me behind my back.' 'If I don't go to class Godfrey will think that I'm x,y,z.' Or, 'If I don't go to class I won't be able to show everybody how brilliant I am.' Imagining all of these possible scenarios is the gift and the burden of the cortex. Because we can imagine so many options and looking at these options say: 'Well this is the one that I would prefer, but because of my mother/father/the laws of the land, I'll go for this one instead.' And then actions follow that choice.

When we've made a choice to do something, that we think will win us approval and then we don't win that approval, it's really easy afterwards, to say: 'Fuck I think I shouldn't have done that. I should

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have just stayed in bed. He wouldn't have given a fuck if I'd been on the platform or not.' Of course, this happens to some people more than to others but I think it would be either a very rare or dishonest human being who would say: 'Well I've never had a thought like that. I've never thought that I shouldn't have done that/said that.' Well what does it matter if you say that? What does it matter if you say: 'I shouldn't have done that.' It doesn't matter really does it? It's just noise going through your brain.

I don't know what you're like but there was a Catholic here last week who has a real problem with her body: with being comfortable with it and the sensations that it produces in her. She feels guilt very easily. Of course this is not exclusive to Catholics. It's exclusive to religion. Any kind of code in which there is an indication or suggestion of how you should behave if you want to win some kind of approval whether it's from God, or a priest, or your mother, father, is an invitation to feeling guilty. But guilt's not too much of a problem. We all have loads of it but we still can get to work. We still can draw money out of a machine in the wall.

So guilt is not too much of a problem. So what is the problem of saying: 'I shouldn't have done that'? Obviously there's not such a big problem until you change the pronoun to: 'he/she/they shouldn't have done that.' And very soon the Twin Towers are not standing. Very soon millions of Jews have been slaughtered in death camps because they shouldn't be allowed to exist. Why? Because they shouldn't be like that, because they shouldn't look like that, think like that. They shouldn't have such dark skin, such thick lips, such big buttocks. And all of a sudden this tendency to say: 'I/they/he should or shouldn't', this tendency to assume that you could/should have done something differently looks a little bit more dangerous than it does at first glance. These are very, very dangerous words: 'should' and 'shouldn't' when they refer to human interaction and thought.

Faced everyday, every hour that we're awake, by the need to make choices we find that most of them do bring about more or less the outcome that we intended. You put the key in the ignition and the car starts over and over again. It's very rare the car doesn't start. Hopefully. Let's say you decide to clean your teeth. Normally, I imagine, you just clean them. Or at least you go through the motions of cleaning them and this is happening so often, so consistently, that it's almost impossible not to be left with the impression

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that conscious choices are made by humans freely. But this is only an impression.

To make such a statement as: 'making choices freely is only an impression' is a very dangerous thing to do, a very contentious statement. Because on the one hand it may be taken to infer that there's no such thing as a free choice. But there definitely is: we're making free choices all the time. We're making what we call 'choice', what we call 'freely' all the time. The other danger is being able to choose freely is for many human beings at the heart of what it is to be human. Martin Luther watched hundreds, thousands of people dying under the sword in good conscience as a result of his insistence that every individual be free to choose according to their own conscience how they should believe.

This is at the heart of Protestantism. This is why Sir Thomas Moore died, even though he was a Catholic. Because he believed that he must choose according to his own conscience what he should say. He would not lie under oath. Very deep in the heart of human beings, as a result of the Reformation, is the sacrament of making choices freely according to your own conscience. And so when a statement is made such as: 'Free choice is only an impression,' then this deeply cherished belief in what is supposedly the heart of being human is being challenged or threatened

Why am I doing this with my stick? You can come up with all kinds of reasons, just for the sake of argument to speculate about why I'm doing this. Well let's just say for the sake of argument, it's to dissipate excess nervous energy so that I don't shout too loud, so that my words don't become too excessive. To dissipate the huge amount of energy that happens to normally reside in this organism, some movement is necessary. Just holding this stick deals with some of it and then moving it releases more. So you could say: is this being done freely? At first glance you'd have to say: 'Yes, of course Godfri's freely moving his stick across the mat. But actually he's not. He's driven to move it across the mat so as to stay a little bit calm whilst talking about these things.'

And is this movement to pour a cup of tea being made freely? Or has Michelle's equivalent action suggested into Godfri's brain strongly that he'd better listen to his body's signals of dehydration now and do something about them. Because he did make a conscious decision before he started to talk that he would not drink and he made

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that choice freely because he didn't want to get up and go to the toilet like he did yesterday. But you can see how much that free choice was worth. Absolutely nothing. Perhaps a little suffering to his cells as they sat there deprived of water for however many minutes it was.

The significance of what I'm saying is not whether or not you, or I, or Kant, or Hume, or Martin Luther knows whether or not there is such a thing as free will. This is all, as far as I'm concerned, irrelevant. What is relevant is: how do human beings feel and how do they relate to each other on the basis of how they feel? Take that woman walking past me, or take that bloke over there with dark skin. I don't like people with dark skin, so I'm going to be rude to them, get rid of them, make them feel so uncomfortable being in my presence that they'll fuck off and never bother me again. This is how people behave, isn't it? Especially in England! Maybe other countries too but England is what I'm used to.

This is what I'm concerned with. Not academic arguments about whether a table has any existence before a human being looks at it. Which of course you can argue either way and be totally right. It depends on how you define your terms. But yoga is not philosophy, not about coming up with some unchallengeable definition of anything. Yoga is about life, human life, being human, what it means to be human. And it may well be that Descartes or Kant spent hours and hours considering such questions as: is a table really there or is it just a figment of my imagination? Or: does time really exist or is it just an impression created in the cortex? I'm not trying to belittle these questions. But these kinds of questions don't bother most people, not deeply enough for people to dedicate their lives to them.

But there is a kind of question that all human beings are faced with and it's this kind of question that yoga is designed to help us find the answer to. And if you put it a little bit in the abstract it's: how do choices come about? But it's not that. That's too abstract; it becomes too academic very quickly. The question that yoga seeks to answer is a very simple question: what am I supposed to do now? What should I do now? This is the fundamental human question. This is not the fundamental question of being a cat, elephant or tree. This is the fundamental question of being human. It's the most asked question and it's the one that creates a need for an answer more instantly than any other. You can ask yourself: 'what's the meaning of time?' You don't need to answer it today do you? You

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can wait a little bit. But if you ask yourself: 'What should I do now?' you have to answer it now. And you are always asking yourself that and answering it, even if unconsciously. Even, for example, Michelle asked herself, unconsciously or consciously: 'shall I drink some more water?' Answer came: 'Yes I shall.'

At a certain point this question: 'Shall I get up and go now?' is going to come up isn't it? Some of you might be a little timid and you might not ask yourself that kind of question until a few people have already answered it by getting up and going. But this is a question that life is constantly asking of us. Shall I get married, or not? Shall I change my job or not? Shall I go to Italy, or not? Shall I practice, or not? Shall I do Tai Chi or yoga? Shall I eat chick peas, or lentils? Shall I eat rice or quinoa? Especially when you string all these questions one after another, they don't seem to have any kind of significance. They're just the kind of questions that you're asking all the time and that you're answering all the time.

But what happens if somebody you love stops loving you? Then it becomes a more significant question: what should I do now? Or if you lose your job: what should I do now? But it's the same fundamental question. What is the next action that I can take that will make me feel as comfortable as possible? And it is on that basis that we answer all of these questions. We answer all of these questions so that we can become as comfortable as possible for as long as possible. And this is actually an organic and cellular imperative arising from your cells. Every cell in your body needs to be comfortable, it needs to have enough liquid, salt, heat, contact etc. And if it doesn't it feels uncomfortable. And then you start to feel uncomfortable.

But you're not just an agglomeration of cells are you? You're a human being. You also need, to one degree or another, contact with other forms of life. You need physical contact, verbal contact. You need to be understood, to be recognised, to be seen, heard, loved. You need to be able to eat, to keep yourself warm. These are all imperatives, these are not neuroses. We need to eat, to sleep, to be warm, to be touched, seen, heard, touched, loved. We need to love and we need to touch, to hear. And when we become deprived of all these things, then we realise that we need them.

But because we're never totally deprived of them we can think: 'Well I don't really need to be heard, to be seen, to be loved.' But try it for fifty years being neither loved, seen or heard. You know

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what happened to the Masai warriors when put into a prison: they died within days. Not of any disease; they just died because they have no sense of time and they think they're there forever, in that strange environment where there isn't a tree or a rustle of wind or a reebok to be seen. So they die. Can you imagine that the Buddha would have been perfectly happy to have never been heard or understood. You can only imagine that; it's your fantasy. It has nothing to do with what actually happened. The Buddha was understood. The Buddha was heard. The Buddha was deeply loved and still is.

When we ask ourselves the question: 'What should I do now?', the asking of the question implies a choice, that we must select between options. But this is nothing more than that: an implication, an impression created by the cortex and the narrowing of our attention onto our need and its fulfilment. 'What should I do now? Should I marry him? Should I divorce her? Should I go and eat or sit here a little longer? The pressure to resolve the question narrows our attention so much that we become unable to see actually where the question arose from, where the answer will arise from and where the answer will lead to.

On the bottom of this stick, there are some marks: one, two, three, four, five, six. Now I don't know how those marks got there. I don't know who, with what kind of implements, put them there. I'm not very happy that they're there. It ruins the aesthetic beauty of this stick that Kim so lovingly made for me. So when I find out who put them there, I'm going to put this stick to another use. I might be joking, but you can imagine that that could be the response of somebody, who finding that their treasured possession had been defaced by some brutal and insensitive person. It was not a cat: too regular. It was not a dog or a bird. It was a human being that did this. Perhaps. And if that perhaps were not able to insert itself into that sentence then I might be quite angry. Perhaps you can understand that. Perhaps it's happened to you: you come back to your Ferrari or your Porsche parked very nicely outside Harrods, a very nice well to do area, and it's been scratched all the way down the side. It certainly happens to me every time I take my Porsche out. It's likely to make you angry, isn't it? What's the world coming to?

If you're in a football crowd and you happen to have gone to the wrong end and you're wearing the wrong colours and somebody kicks you in the ankle and breaks it, if you're a bloke anyway, you're

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quite likely to be angry. And if you don't want to get the rest of the shit kicked out of you, you're going to have to curtail the rest of your testosterone response very effectively, because you're surrounded by dedicated shitkickers and you're wearing the wrong colour. But if you're walking up this mountain and you slip and break an ankle, you may get a little bit angry. It's not the same, is it? You may not even get angry at all. You might just be in pain, a little upset, a bit worried that you might not be able to get down. And then you worry that everybody else is going to worry about you.

But a similar condition in your ankle can produce totally different reactions and responses according to whom or what you think is responsible. If you think that within that responsibility there's something that could be called 'choice' or freewill, you're more likely to be angry. Like if someone chooses to kick you and break your ankle because they're wearing red and you're wearing blue. And then you become angry. That's small scale. But larger scale, like the Twin Towers being blown up with thousands of people being killed, is the same process: "these fucking murderous heathens". And believe me I totally sympathise with Osama Bin Laden's interpretation of western culture. But it doesn't make me so angry that I want to blow up the victims of it. For that's what we are, victims as much as perpetrators of the evils of the civilisation we so ostentatiously enjoy. You could say yoga is an enquiry into the possibility of not participating in your own, personal Twin Towers, in your own acts of vengeance, in your own indulgence of blame. Including self blame or guilt. And this invitation is extended through the clarification of the true nature of choice, which involves the clarification of the true nature of action.

I'd like to say something about true natures now before we go any further so we can be clear perhaps about what I mean by true nature. True nature is a word that's used a lot in Zen, in Buddhism. Zen Buddhism is all about 'awakening to your true nature, living from your true nature.' The implication of this kind of phraseology is that you are already asleep to your true nature and living from your false nature. This is a very dangerous implication, that there is something else that is more really what you are than what you already are. This is what Nietzsche's whole life was about, telling us from the past: "don't do that to yourself". "Don't tell yourself that there's something other than what you are, that's what you should be, that's better than what you are". Because if you do that you can but suffer. There is no way out from that little, very dangerous,

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story. There is no 'happy ever after' in that popular story. So what I mean by true nature is not that which stands against or opposite to so called false nature, but the wholeness of the both, the fullness of the spectrum.

Ramana Maharshi was fond of saying that the deadliest forms of suffering come from believing the 'I am the body' thought. That when that thought takes effect we act as if it were true. The implication of that is of course 'I am not the body,' if the 'I am the body' thought is not true and considered dangerous. But this flies against the face of our experience. If we are not the body then what on earth are we? Who is speaking? What is speaking? A body is speaking. A particular body is speaking and that particular body is Godfrey isn't it? It's not Sara, it's not Michelle. Now playing with the belief that I am the body is no more dangerous than playing with the belief that I am not the body. Or being played with by those beliefs as the case may be.

So, what I mean by true nature is at one end: 'I am the body.' At the other end: 'I am not the body.' And everything that's in between, all together. So what this means with regard to making choices is: we make choices, we do. This is undeniable. We make choices in a particular way according to our cortical activity which we call 'freely making a choice.' So we freely make a choice in terms of our feeling, our experience, our day to day sense of how life unfolds, we're making choices all the time freely but when we stop and step back and look more closely at how these choices are made, we see that we don't make them freely. We see that they arise as a result of a huge network of forces and factors, of conditions over which, it turns out when we look closely, we really have no control. And therefore the choices were not made freely.

So really when I say true nature, the true nature of choice making doesn't mean that we don't make choices and it doesn't mean that we do make choices. It means that we make choices from a certain level of our functioning or a certain level of our awareness or a certain perspective. And from another perspective we don't. And you can't deny either and expect to survive without guilt and without blame. But if you deny the perspective that choices do not arise freely then you will be burdened by guilt and blame forever. But if you deny the perspective that you don't make free choices, you will be abandoned by your brothers and sisters forever, because you will

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be refusing to take responsibility for the actions that you actually take, even if you did not take them freely.

So let's go back to George Bush and Osama Bin Laden, to their political and religious battlefield. Both these gentlemen are under the impression that they are humble and righteous servants of God. Not only are they humble and righteous servants of God, but they are favoured by God. God speaks to them, guides them directly. And they both speak of the Will of God. They both speak of the actions that they're involved with as the Will of God. And they're probably both convinced that the other one is not a humble and righteous servant of God, that the other one is not fulfilling the Will of God. Therefore we are all subject to their warfare as if God were so limited and narrow that he couldn't have multiple so-called Wills, or multiple so-called intentions or agendas. What kind of God is that, that he can't handle two things at once. Must be a bloke, after all.

We don't have to make the kinds of choices that George Bush or Osama Bin Laden makes in terms of their socio-political economic impact, the impact on the lives of millions of human beings. But nevertheless, actually we make the same kinds of choices all the time. And we make them in exactly the same way, that both of them make theirs: according to the forces generated upon us by the circumstances, external and internal, within which we find ourselves. All of our choices, that we appear to make so freely, along with all of those choices that happen unconsciously, are the result of a specific configuration of internal and external circumstances meeting in that moment. A configuration of circumstances which extends back and out in time and space further than you can ever find a beginning or an end to.

Seeing this doesn't take away the need to freely make choices; it doesn't take away the fact that those choices were made in a particular brain. And that those choices made in that particular brain produce particular actions in a particular body; and that particular body and brain bears your name therefore conventionally speaking they are your actions. They cannot be said to be anybody else's. Yet, at the same time, they had to happen like that. They had to happen like that because the network of causation, the network of conditions that brought them about already existed and impinged upon that moment of that decision exactly as it did. To turn round afterwards and say: 'I shouldn't have done that!' is meaningless. Except for its ability to produce guilt and blame. Just as to say " i didn't do that is

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absurd. You did, i didn't. Simple as that. It's the doing that's not so simple. The instrument is beyond doubt.

To say 'I/he/they/we should not have done something' is pure speculation. It's not true, it's wishful thinking, it's fantasy. The truth is that you did what you did, you said what you said and so did everybody else. This is what I mean by truth. I'm not seeking to define absolute truth. I'm just telling you now what I mean by truth. Truth is what we can all agree upon if we're honest and open. It is true that we are, each one of us upon this platform. This is what I mean by truth. This is what I don't mean by truth: 'Well actually we're really butterflies dreaming that we're human beings and that this can be proved by Chuang Tzu if you listen to him carefully.' It's true that my stick just came down upon the mat. It is not true that it might not have done. That is not truth, that is speculation, fantasy, invention. That is the recognition that the human brain could imagine that it didn't have to have, according to academic functional possibilities. But it did. And it's going to do it again now, I think (thump!). Now this stick is on the mat. To say: 'It doesn't have to be on the mat' is pure speculation. To say: 'You could lift it up' is pure speculation. Because to lift it up I need to intend to; I have to choose to. And if I don't intend to, if I don't chose to it will not lift up no matter how much you can argue: 'But it could be up, you could choose to lift it up.' I'm not going to lift it up until I choose to. No amount of speculation can make me lift it up. Now I'm going to lift it up.

TS Eliot, God bless his reactionary soul, will be so used to me misquoting him by now that he may stop turning in his grave every time i open my mouth on this subject. But I am going to misquote him again. Perhaps I'll get it right this time. The beginning of what to me is the most enviable poem ever written, as somebody who always fantasised about writing just one poem that was really, really mindblowingly brilliant. To be faced with the Four Quartets is very easily to be triggered into envy, if you have such aspirations. Do you know it?

'Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future.'

Note the perhaps, note the emphasis that Joe gave to the perhaps. That's exactly where I got the perhaps in my teaching from, from TS Eliot. Realising how great it is to be a poet instead of a

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teacher. You don't have to make any categorical statements. You can just say: 'what if...' and then follow through with beautiful imagery. So it goes something like this:

'Time present and time past are both perhaps contained in time future and if all time is eternally present then all time is eternally unredeemable. What could have been, what might have been remain always a perpetual possibility only in a world of speculation. What might have been and what has been point always to one end which is now.'

You could say this is the most technical part of the poem and the rest of the poem takes you off into different levels of your sensibility to invite you to understand the implications of that opening, perhaps the most profound and potentially liberating opening of any poem. The use of the word 'if' and 'perhaps' is very, very clever. By using 'if' and 'perhaps' you don't have to disagree; you just have to consider the flow of the words and take their implications freely without having to give up your cherished belief in free will. What TS Eliot is saying is that only what happened, happened. What did not happen did not happen. To say that it could or should have happened is to move away from truth, from reality, into a realm of perpetual possibility that is pure speculation and irrelevant. It does not change what is actually happening; it does not change the now. What is actually happening is actually happening because what actually happened before it actually happened. What actually did not happen before it actually did not happen.

Because that which is actually happening is actually happening. I'm actually lifting up my stick again. What is actually happening is actually not a matter of opinion, whether it's observed or not, whether it's understood or remarked upon or not. What is actually happening is actually happening and it's actually happening as a result of things that happened beforehand. This beforehand goes back as far as you can imagine time extending and beyond the limits of your imagination. The past happened in exactly the way that it happened and that is the way that it happened. The past did happen in exactly the way that it happened. The path did not happen in any way slightly differently from the way that it happened. This is so obvious isn't it? The past happened the way that it happened. And because the past happened exactly the way that it happened, the present is happening exactly the way that it's happening.

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Some of us can have belittled thought and mind so deeply that you could say: 'yes, but that's just the mind.' But it's the mind that's saying that. It's in the mind that you make your choices, live your life, feel guilt, create blame. The mind creates blame and guilt when it's not seeing clearly. When the mind sees clearly, blame and guilt dissolve. All the mind has to clearly see is that that which is actually happening is actually happening because of what actually happened beforehand. That the past actually did happen and it actually did happen exactly how it happened.

Olivia's getting up to walk off the platform. We don't know why but what we can say is that she's getting up because of forces and factors that were already in place. Maybe it's her bladder. Who knows? And her bladder was given to her by her mother and her father and then it was messed about, distorted by her alcoholic binges as a teenager. As a result she's not able to stay here listening respectfully to my talk. She's a bitch! A rude, insensitive, irresponsible bitch! Disrespectful, thoughtless, arrogant. This is how the mind works isn't it? When people do things that we think that they should not have. When we think that they could not have. When we think that she actually should have been able to stay there longer. This is where so much human suffering comes from. So much completely unnecessary human suffering based on total delusion. The delusion that things could have been different. They were not different. She did get up. She is now coming back, maybe. She hasn't got here yet. Until she gets here we don't know.

Of course, this does not mean that they are not going to change. Of course they are, and we can maybe participate in those changes according to our desires, attachments, preferences. But what is happening, what has happened can not be changed. You have to be able to hear this clearly, and then see it clearly, and not just give it over to your belief systems and their need to uphold themselves. If you do manage that guilt and blame will become a thing of the past. But not the desire to change things, to make the world fit your preferences, attachments, desires more snugly. I mean we're human beings after all, we can't seem to help but be arrogant. Its not just actors and footballers who are arrogant is it. Its presidents, priests, imams, and yoga teachers too. Arrogant enough to act as if we can make the world in our own image, and that everyone else should participate in that. It would be quite funny if it were not so fucking tragic.

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Yoga, you could say, is an invitation to clarify the true nature of choice making, to clarify the true nature of actions, to see their conditioned nature. To create such a big space in you that you stop blaming anybody, whether it's yourself, your father, mother, lover, children, employer, teacher. It doesn't mean that all of a sudden you like them all. It certainly doesn't mean that all of a sudden you like everything that they do and say or that you enjoy it. It just means you see its conditioned nature without being afraid of the implications of that word 'conditioned.'

You are being conditioned right now by the wind, sun, turning of the earth, my voice, the words that I speak. We've got no idea quite how you're being conditioned and you're all being conditioned uniquely. Nevertheless to be human is to be constantly undergoing conditioning, to be constantly changing, responding to circumstance, changing your understanding, your body temperature, attitude, behaviour. You're conditioned by the food you eat, by the sounds that you hear, by everything. Everything affects you. You are a hypersensitive organic radar system being conditioned. You're not just a radar though; you're not just perceiving like a radar. You're also an action configuration. You're expressing the implications of what you perceive. You're moving this way or that, at this speed or that, with this intention, or that.

There's no doubt that it feels good to be flexible and strong. There's no doubt that it's useful to be able to concentrate. There's no doubt that many, if not all, the things that can be given to you by yoga posture practice are beneficial and it feels good to have them. But I doubt whether any of them are as fruitful in terms of human happiness as the absence of blame and guilt, which comes necessarily, inevitably as a result of seeing clearly the conditioned nature of all choices, all actions and all perceptions. But you won't see this clearly, you won't be free from guilt and blame, if you just stay cosy with your unproven and unprovable belief in freewill, in volition.



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CONDITIONING AND FREEDOM



Everyday, every human being takes many, many actions, no matter what their particular nature may be, no matter what circumstances they find themselves in. In taking many, many actions some of those are operating below the threshold of awareness. Some are operating into awareness but from below the threshold of awareness. Many decisions take place unconsciously, with no overt choosing involved. For example, the decision to move your legs or reach for a cup. It happens unconsciously: the body deciding that it's time to ease the pressure in a particular joint or bone or to re-hydrate the tissues of the body.

Some actions are not only taking place in the light of awareness but are generated consciously in the form of decisions. Decisions involving choosing between options, choosing between conceptual possibilities. This is the fundamental trait or quality of being human. Human behaviour is not instinctive, operating out of the back brain somewhere. Human beings may sometimes act instinctively but what we regard as the important aspects of life involve conscious decision making: what to do with our career, who to marry or not marry, who to take drugs with, which drugs to take. These are the important decisions that we make as human beings, or so we think.

But the fundamental human question is not: 'why on earth did I choose these parents?' Or 'what is the meaning of life?' Or 'What is the nature of God?' Or 'what is the origin of the universe or time?' The fundamental human question is: 'what should I do now?' 'I feel like eating some chocolate but I know that it's bad for me. What should I do now? Should I eat it or should I not?' And very often the decision's made: 'I won't' and two seconds later another decision is made: 'I will.' We're all very familiar with this kind of process. So familiar with this kind of process that this question: 'what should I do now?' arising perhaps a thousand times some days is so common that we don't really notice it anymore. In not really noticing it anymore we don't realise its significance and from that we cannot derive its implications. Conscious decision making, is the essence of being human. On that process the quality of your life appears to hinge: making the right decision or the wrong decision, making the differ-

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ence between pleasure and pain, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, between a life enjoyed and a life bemoaned.

There are many kinds of freedom which human beings seek. Freedom of speech, freedom from poverty, freedom from starvation. Political freedom: the freedom to live the way your principals dictate. Psychological freedom: the freedom to be true to yourself, the freedom to express yourself truly, honestly, deeply, fully and consistently. Then there is also spiritual freedom, or at least that is what we are led to believe, that there is such a thing as spiritual freedom. And that this freedom is more significant, more benevolent, more satisfying than political, economical, ideological, social or psychological freedom. This freedom has historically been given many names: moksa, mukta, muna, enlightenment, freedom, liberation. This freedom has been given many very tempting qualities and characteristics: delight, ecstasy, rapture, peace, compassion, wisdom, etc. The list of the remarkable attributes of spiritual freedom is fairly endless.

Human beings in general tend not to be particularly careful, and we know this. We're not careful of our environment, of each other, or ourselves. If we're not careful and we receive these words such as freedom, peace, understanding or liberation without due care and attention, without due consideration of what such things could possibly mean to being human, then we're not only likely to make a whole bunch of assumptions, but those assumptions are bound to entangle and imprison us. Then we feel oppressed by that entanglement: and then we really feel a need for freedom. So you could say the spiritual game is self fulfilling: make everybody feel imprisoned and then liberate them.

Every day each human being, each one of us, is faced by the need to make decisions. Very often the need to make decisions can feel oppressive. We're normally quite clear about what outcome we would like, but we're not necessarily too clear about how to get it. This can create anxiety, this can create fear, this can create paralysis even, an inability to make a decision. If we're not being careful, if we're not paying close attention to that which is actually happening within us then it can seem like decision making is a very difficult process. It can seem that decision making is something that must be based on possession of enough accurate information, a lot of which would need to be predictive about what is likely to happen.

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As we begin to openly and honestly look at what is happening in the mind sooner or later we have to notice that silence is participating with sound. Silence is participating with thought, with perception. That sound is not in conflict with silence; that thinking is not in conflict with silence. But also we must begin to recognise that the movement of our mind, the music of our mind, the exact nature of the perceptions and thoughts that arise in our minds are not only fundamentally but totally conditioned. Exactly what thought arises and exactly when it arises is an expression of internal and external conditions: temperature, pressure, hydration, background noise, sensations in the joints, what you ate this morning, what you ate last night, what you dreamt last night, how much sex you've had in the last week, how much sex you haven't had in the last two years, or whatever! Of course we don't see this if we are trying to impose some preconceived ideal that we've heard or read about such as: 'meditation is about stilling, purifying and controlling the mind'. If we are pursuing rumour on the basis of wishing thinking, and calling it meditation, then we are just going to become more uptight than a frustrated car salesman.

These conditions underpinning and determining our thoughts extend all the way back and out as a network of causality, which is infinite in every direction. You could not experience anything whatsoever at all if your great, great, great, great, great, great grandparents, and there's a lot of them, had not all coupled exactly when they coupled and produced the offspring that they produced all the way down to you. If we pay careful attention to anything in a spirit of enquiry, it's not very hard to see the totally conditioned nature of any phenomenon, however big or small. Take any phenomenon, any action, any situation, any event, any object. If we ask the question: 'what is the process by which this phenomenon came into existence?' we will start to unravel the matrix of causality, the matrix of actions and objects, the matrix of the conditions that are bringing about every action simultaneously through the same single, indivisible network of causation.

Now of course we do know that there is one thing that is not conditioned: the behaviour of enlightened people. Now this is a card that is so often thrown upon the table. 'Yes you are conditioned but not I, I am not conditioned, I am enlightened and therefore you'd better give me your attention, give me your respect, give me your money or whatever it is that I want from you. Of course all I want from you, because I am enlightened and unconditioned, is your free-

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dom: give me your freedom!' How many times has that kind of shit been uttered apparently in good faith? If you're not careful, you might think that I'm being cynical. But there's no bitterness in what I say, there's no disappointment in it. I know exactly why I want you to be free. I want you to be free so that I can enjoy my life more. That's why I want you to be free. So that I have more people to play with, and a world left to play in. There's nothing noble about what I'm trying to do. It's as selfish as anything else. No more and no less than anything else. I do what I do and even though it does sometimes help people greatly I do it because I want to, because I feel like it. No different to an alcoholic reaching for another drink. They do so because they feel like it. That's how they are set up, and this is how i am set up.

It is not possible to be alive and to escape from conditioning. When Bob Dylan was once asked what had influenced him in his phenomenal creativity, he answered: 'you open your eyes and your ears and you're influenced.' In other words, everything that had ever happened to him had influenced his songs. This he knew clearly. It is no different for any of us. As long as consciousness is operating through even one sense, we are being influenced, we're being shaped, we're being modified. We are being conditioned. To be human is to be conditioned. From this there is no escape except to escape being human, which is called death. Conditioning means nothing other than cause and effect. You can't escape cause and effect. Don't drink and you dehydrate, drink and you re-hydrate. There's no escape from causality; there's no escape from conditioning.

This is obvious, anybody can see it for themselves. You don't need to be Einstein, you just need to be honest in your observation of life. You don't even need to observe anything subtle. You certainly don't need to observe anything esoteric. You don't even need to observe your mind. Freedom is not, not conditioning. Freedom is a condition, a condition that spiritual seekers are seeking, a condition that can be verbally construed and described as if being conditionless. But it is a condition. It's taking place within a body that has a particular form which has a set of conditions. It's taking place within a mind that has a particular configuration which is also a set of conditions from which there is no escape but denial, and that is no escape at all. Conditioning remains, under all circumstances, though its shape is constantly changing.

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Within the honest and open recognition that all phenomena are totally conditioned, all phenomena without exception are conditioned to the infinite degree. There's no end to this conditioning; there's no limit on this conditioning; there's no escape from this conditioning. Within the recognition of this, a remarkable and deeply rewarding freedom flowers. A freedom that is very real; a freedom that is almost tangible; a freedom that is beyond dispute; a freedom that has nothing to do with abstract ideologies or definitions of truth or of reality. A freedom that makes the difference between appreciating being alive with a deep and irrevocable gratitude and resenting being alive, however subtle and disowned that resentment may be. Between struggling with being alive and accepting the magnificence of life, warts and all. The flowering of this freedom rests upon the incontrovertible and uncompromising recognition of the conditioned nature of all phenomena. The flowering of this freedom rests upon the withering away of volition, of free will. This takes place in tandem with the recognition of the conditioned nature of all phenomena.

Philosophers and theologians have been debating the existence of free will for millennia. Not very far from here, approximately five to six hundred years ago, a revolution took place in Florence. A revolution that's come to be known as the Renaissance. Part of this revolution was the insistence of human autonomy, human free will. It wasn't a new concept. St Augustine had written about it 1500 years before. Martin Luther got his boot in ahead too. But the Will of God had its grip broken by the Renaissance. So of course you can find arguments about the existence and nature of free will far more intelligent and cogent than any argument that I could produce. But personally I am not interested in the argument about whether or not free will exists. What I'm concerned about is what it feels like to be human. What it feels like to be you. What it feels like to be faced over and over and over again with exactly the same question. And, over and over again, to not quite know how to answer it. Which is why you ask it in its many, many forms. And in not knowing how to answer it, you feel oppressed by life; you feel at least in that moment that life is somehow difficult, that life is a trial, that life is burdensome. This simple, everyday, universal, monumental question of 'what should I do now?'

When you see clearly the conditioned nature of all phenomena, such a question arises in a totally different way. Such a question arises more like: 'I wonder what am I going to do now?' A little bit

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like when you're watching the movie and you consciously or unconsciously ask yourself: 'I wonder what's going to happen next?' With total avid interest and no concern or anxiety whatsoever, even if the hero or heroine you've identified yourself with might be about to be blown up, raped, murdered, imprisoned or whatever. The clarification of the conditioned nature of all phenomena makes quite clear that intent, volition, the making of choices; the taking of decisions is conditioned. That there's nothing free about it at all, even though it feels like it. It feels like you're freely choosing whether to go to class or not. It feels like you're freely choosing to go to this yoga retreat or that. It feels like you're freely choosing your teacher, it feels like you're freely choosing your friends. To some people, because they're so deeply confused, it even feels like they freely chose their parents. It probably doesn't feel like that at all; they just wish that such a freedom, such a power could be part of being human: which it obviously is not. Let the bullshit death knell ring!

It is such a strong impression that we make our choices freely. It is a necessary impression; otherwise we probably wouldn't bother to make them. It's the result of the hyper-development of the cortex: being able to simulate, being able to imagine, possibilities. Then having done that to assess which one would be the most effective in bringing about whatever is desired. Then choosing it as if that choice was free, as if any of the aspects about that choice were not totally conditioned: which they are. Whether a phenomenon is conditioned or not is really not a matter of opinion. It's a matter of observation. How hot you are on this platform is conditioned by how many clothes you are wearing, the height of the sun, the moisture in the air, the day of year etc. And how hot you are, how dry you are, how comfortable you are determines the thoughts that come into your head. 'Shall I move, I'm uncomfortable, I don't like this, I want to go.' The sun participating in the conditioned causation of that thought, that impulse.

What this means is that you are not alone. What this means is that you are not apart from the totality of the universe. You are the functioning of the totality of the universe, conceivable and inconceivable, in a particular space/time location which in its organic form happens to bear your name. The deep recognition of the totally conditioned nature, without exception or escape, of all phenomena, becomes sooner or later the recognition that you're not alone, and everything is already taken care of. Everything is already taken care of. The conditions which are going to produce the actions which

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you're going to take in two minutes, the decision you're going to make in ten seconds, are already 99.99999% laid down. We know the Muslims call this 'already written.' We don't like the sound of it, perhaps, but it's true. Not philosophically true, not absolutely true: there are no such things. Experientially, observably, obviously true. Of course this is not to be taken literally. There's not some bloke who's written the story of the universe. Of course it's not already written. It's already written is a metaphor. It means: it's coming; it's already taken care of. It means: it is not actually down to you. You do not actually have to get your shit together. Your shit is as together as it gets, moment by moment. It's got together by the whole universe, or shall we call that God.

As the (illusory) impression of volition withers away, the flower of freedom flourishes. A very simple freedom and a very welcome freedom. It is not a freedom from death or taxation. It is not a freedom from suffering or tears; it is not a freedom from pain when a bone breaks. It is not a freedom from pain when the temperature is too hot or pain when the temperature is too cold. Such freedoms are childish wishful thinking and never happen. Everybody has their boiling points. Everybody has their freezing points, even if somebody you think is wonderfully enlightened has a boiling point 25 degrees above yours, they still have a boiling point. You could still set them on fire and you could still freeze them to death, no matter how many devotees they may have, no matter how many years they've been sitting in a cave next to a fire conditioning themselves to become less sensitive to heat to raise their boiling point.

When the illusory impression of volition withers away the flower of real freedom flourishes; not imaginary freedom. You know it's real because stripped away from your shoulders, stripped away from your mind is all guilt, all blame, all shame, all regret. Stripped away also is all anxiety about the future, but not all interest. You can see this in India by the way they drive. Why worry? If the car's got your name on it, it's going to hit you. And what amazing judgement that creates in them. The hair's breadth by which they miss each other, second after second, minute after minute in a way that we could never do because we're trying to get our shit together alone. Whereas they are functioning with the support of their God. We are also actually functioning with the same support of the same God, the same universe, the same totality functioning through us. We are not actually depending upon the accuracy of our decisions. Thank God

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for that. After all how many of our decisions do we actually act on? How many of those that we act on produce what we intend?

Recognising the totally conditioned nature of all phenomena is to recognise the illusory nature of all volition. Recognising the illusory nature of all volition is to recognise that everything is taken care of. That you're every breath, thought, feeling, choice, decision, action is coming straight from God. So it is not just George Bush who is being spoken to by God. Every word you hear in your mind, every feeling you have, every sensation is coming straight from God. God is obviously a bit of a joker. That he should tell Osama Bin Laden to blow up the twin towers and George Bush to invade Iraq perhaps in the same breath does indicate that God has a sense of humour. A sense of humour that human beings might find a little difficult to appreciate if they are arrogant enough to assume that God would operate according to the same criteria that they would. Arrogant enough to cast God in the image of themselves. Not very long ago, in the middle of August there was a hail storm. A hail storm in which the hail was so big and heavy that it penetrated some of the bin covers and dented the cars. You could well imagine that if some unfortunate person had been hit by one of them at the right angle they would have been killed. So unconcerned is the universe, so unconcerned is God, by our trivialities and our anxious clinging to life.

If everything is taken care of, why worry? If everything is conditioned, why worry? The answer is very simple: because you've been conditioned to. You've been conditioned to worry, and so you worry. And what is it that's conditioned you to worry more than anything else? It's the impression of choosing freely, and within that impression of choosing freely, feeling that you might make a wrong choice or a bad choice again. Imagine if you make a mistake choosing your husband or your wife. What a disaster that would be! It's a disaster most of us have known, even if we've never been married. Most of us, if we're old enough, have known it a few times. What a disaster that was! And out of the impression of free will in the past, we pluck anxiety about the future. We worry about things that are none of our business.

This doesn't mean that all worry is neurotic. It means that most worry is neurotic. There's one particular kind of worry that's definitely not neurotic: a worry that's clearly natural and organic. Some of you may have experienced it, especially if you have children and you're absent from them. You worry don't you? That's organic,

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that's necessary. If you didn't worry you wouldn't take the steps necessary to ensure their survival. And that's your business, to take care of your children. But if you love anybody, even if not your child, it's an organic response to worry about them entering the unknown, on a certain level of feeling. But as soon as it comes into the conscious mind, if you have clarified the conditioned nature of all phenomena, then you will relax. You'll be able to say: 'well, it's coming anyway, but still I'll see what I can do to make sure it comes out the way that makes most sense to me.'

This is not a fatalism; this is not being a control-freak: this is relaxed action. It's enquiring into the possibility of having a good life. And why not? Every cell in your body is asking you to enquire into the possibility of becoming more comfortable, more stable, more relaxed, more at ease, more nourished, more whole. There's nothing wrong with wanting that. That cannot be stopped, that's an organic cellular imperative. Just as concern for a child is an organic cellular imperative in a parent. But worrying whether or not the NASDAQ's going to go up or down tomorrow is a bit on the neurotic side. It makes all of that money a waste of time if you're just going to worry about whether or not you're going to be able to maintain six houses next year or not.

We all know that if we just had a little bit more money we'd be okay wouldn't we? We'd be happier. Just a little bit, we're not talking millions here. Just enough for a house instead of a yurt. Or a new clutch that works instead of a clutch that isn't working properly. Or whatever. But we all also know that this isn't true. Even though that kind of thinking comes up very often without being recognised, we also know by looking at people who have much more money than they need for any number of houses, not yurts, what miserable fuckers they so often are. Yet you can go to the edge of any city in India and find hundreds of people, sometimes thousands of people huddled together in dirt, in shit, in poverty, smiling every time you look them in the eyes. Smiling with a smile that knocks your rocks off. With a smile that you've never ever seen on a European.

To be free from pain is impossible. To be free from pain from the loss of one you love is impossible unless you're heartless, unless you're incapable of love. Somebody you love is bound to die before you. But freedom from blame and everything that comes from blame is possible. From blame comes guilt, regret, resentment,

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anxiety, hostility, pride, arrogance, manipulation. All of these things come from blame. They come from the root of blame: volition, the impression of free will. Let's say Kant argued lucidly 684 pages the existence of free will, which I don't think he did at all, it doesn't matter. And Wittgenstein argued lucidly 684 pages the non-existence of free will. By the time you'd finished reading either you'd probably be convinced. These guys were bright, you'd be convinced. Absolutely totally perfect rational argument for the existence of freewill and the non-existence of free will can be made.

Nevertheless, every day, every one of us makes decisions. Every one of us is faced by the question: 'what should I do now?' And if that question is faced squarely enough, not in order to find out the truth about free will, not in order to find out the meaning of life, but in order to just see what kind of a question it really is, the arguments will all disappear into a relaxation so profound and so welcome that no blame nor any of its offspring can participate in it at all. This freedom is what I would call spiritual freedom. You can be spiritually free without being politically free, you can be spiritually free without being financially free, you can be spiritually free without being socially free, you can be spiritually free without being psychologically free. This is the biggest mistake that most spiritual practitioners make, that the freedom that they're looking for is a psychological freedom. That you should no longer feel jealousy or confusion. That you should no longer want to eat chocolate. This is nonsense!

Spiritual freedom is described rather long windedly, in the Bhagavad Gita. Spiritual freedom can be encapsulated in a single phrase of 5 words as it is by Krishna to Arjuna: 'you are not the doer.' The implications of this phrase: 'you are not the doer' includes everything that you think you can do. You are not the thinker, the feeler, the killer, the archer, the bow puller, the bow string releaser, the deliberator, the decider, the chooser, the choice maker, the feeler, the dreamer, the blamer. You are not the blamer! You are not the shamer, the manipulator, or the doer. It includes all of those, without exception. Any possible human endeavour or action is included in that phrase. You are not that which brings it about. You are merely the most local, the most immediate instrument. But your instrumentality has little more significance than location. It does not signify ownership. The actions, of which you are not the doer but the instrument, belong to God, belong to the whole.

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God is just a word that points to the indivisible and conscious totality of the whole. It is conscious you know, that's how you know! I'm not one of those people who are intimidated by the word God. I happen to love the word God. But I know many people are intimidated by the word God because of their religious experience, because of their conditioning. Out of respect for those who are intimidated by the word God I don't use it as much as I would from my own inclination. But I do love talking to people who believe in God. I especially love talking to Muslims because their conceptualisation of God is so beautiful, even if not in the way that it's lived.

If you are not the doer, the question might arise, 'well who is the doer then?' In the recognition of the conditioned nature of all phenomena it can be clearly seen that the doing is the result of the totality of the unfolding of the universe. So you can say: the Universe is the doer. Krishna does say that once or twice in the Bhagavad Gita when he uses the words prakriti and gunas. There's a word for it, I can't remember what it is, a particular kind of theism to which I am subject. A particular kind of conceptualisation of the nature of God in which the universe is seen as the body of God, the emanation of God. The presence of God being the universe as a whole. So if I say: 'if you are not the doer, who is?' 'God is.' Don't be mistaken by what I mean by the word God.

God is always taking care of everything. This is an inevitable, intellectual conclusion of the recognition of the conditioned nature of all phenomena. A recognition which comes when the weed of volition withers totally away and the flower of freedom fully flourishes. Life then takes place in a very different way. You no longer worry what you're going to do next. You either just do it or you wonder interestedly what's going to happen next. You might say 'what am I going to do next? Am I going to carry on talking for the next 20 minutes or not?' I have absolutely no idea and I absolutely don't give a shit. Nor do I care if all of you get up and go away. Of course as soon as the last one of you gets up I'm going to stop talking. I don't need to know and you don't need to know who's cooking. I don't need to know and you don't need to know what they're cooking. We don't need to know whether we're going to like it, we're going to find out sooner or later. There's no need to waste time worrying about it. Will they create another horrible boring meal? Or will they create another absolutely delicious meal? It makes no difference which way you spin it, which way your preferences lean and turn.

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Now of course this is a metaphor. Within the clarification of the conditioned nature of all phenomena it is not so hard to feel a light touch in the small of your back. This touch is the hand of God guiding you through your days. Guiding you through your decisions. Actually making decision after decision after decision for you in your brain. It's not so hard to feel this, to feel that you are not alone. To feel that you are not in control of your life, that you do not have to get your shit together. The shit get togetherer is God, and God has already got it together. Of course, anyone can argue 'no, there's no such thing as God, no no no, everything is not taken care of.' Look deeply into the eyes of such a person and you will see mistrust of life. Look deeply into the eyes of such a person and you will see unresolved pain. And we all know what comes out of unresolved pain and mistrust. I am not talking absolute truth here. I am talking human experience.

In seeing the conditioned nature of all phenomena freedom will flower. This is the paradox. Only if, and only because, all phenomena are totally conditioned can any freedom possibly exist: and not otherwise. If phenomena were not conditioned then you'd have to get your fucking shit together, you would not be free from guilt and blame, from error, from fucking up. You have never fucked up. It may have felt like you have. Your husband, wife, mother, daughter, son, cousins, uncles and aunts, no matter how much they fucked you over, have not fucked you up. You are not fucked up and you have never fucked up. You have never committed a sin. You are ok, just as you are, you really are totally ok. Even if it doesn't feel like it. But that's only because the notion of volition has got you in its tight and unrelenting grip. If it lets go, as you relax you will see it, you will feel it so deeply it will blow all your shit away. How totally and deeply ok you are.

Close your eyes and imagine a life without confusion, a life without anger, without desire. A life without attachment, without preferences, without thinking. Imagine that life how beautiful it would be. It's hard to imagine isn't it? It's hard because it's not possible and your cortex knows that. Unless perhaps you are conditioned to be so charismatic and benevolent in your presence that hundreds and thousands of people wish to take care of all your problems for you and call you their guru and allow you therefore to concern yourself with nothing other than enjoying the delights of being human without obligation. Then perhaps you will know a life without attach-

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ment, desire, thinking even. Perhaps. But take it from me, if you haven't already given off very clear signs that you're like that, it ain't going to happen. If that charisma is not already palpable, if that stillness is not already tangible, this is not your karma. This is very, very rare karma. Guru karma is not your everyday karma.

Within the karma that you have, freedom is not impossible. In fact, freedom is about as far away from you as your inbreath at the end of an exhalation. It really is the easiest thing in the world: to see clearly. All you have to do is look deeply. The only problem is whether or not you will look deeply. Whether or not you will see clearly, is already written. There's nothing you can do about it either way so you might as well relax and enjoy the ride, recognising that enlightenment or delusion, freedom or bondage do not have more or less significance than each other. They are both equally necessary to the unfolding of the universe, equally indispensable, equally beloved of God. You don't need to win the favour of God. The favour is being bestowed on you breath by breath.

So you can file away the freedom paradox with the silence paradox, with the stillness paradox and all the other paradoxes. Light is not, not dark; silence is not, not sound; stillness is not, not movement. Freedom is not, not conditioned; freedom is not, not conditioning. Freedom is not, not bondage. You are bound by your karma; you are bound by your actions. That in no way obstructs your freedom. It creates it. You are free to enjoy. You do not need to get your shit together. We are all already inherently free. We may not be able to recognise it. We may be free to recognise it, but not yet deeply enough to totally benefit from it. Nevertheless we are all totally free. Sound/silence, light/dark, stillness/movement, freedom/bondage: conceptual dichotomy. There is no such dichotomy except in the diseased dualistic mind which sets opposites against each other: bondage/freedom, delusion/enlightenment. Dichotomy is the disease of the dualistic mind.



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CONDITIONING AND KARMA



So now we're going to consider two totally connected but different themes. One tends to excite paranoia amongst the spiritual: being conditioning. The other tends to excite bullshit amongst the spiritual: or karma. First let's contextualise them. In seeing the indivisible wholeness of totality and the inextricable, inevitable and impersonal nature of all actions and objects in their interconnected intricacies, the impression of autonomy, independence and volition dissolves. At least these impressions become more or less transparent. Through that transparency a deeper truth can be seen: that the instruments of action are not their cause. Actions do not belong to their instruments even though instruments are specific, even unique, to particular actions.

Adyashanti, whose credentials are pretty impressive, interestingly says that there are two qualities that invite freedom. A clarity of intention and an intensity of effort are not to be counted among them. The two qualities that are pertinent to freedom are: relaxation and curiosity. Curiosity can be seen as the tendency, drive, or even need to enquire.

The recognition that an instrument is not the owner of its actions, but merely the deliverer, raises certain questions: 'what the fuck am I if don't have any autonomy?' 'What the fuck am I if I don't have any independence?' 'What the fuck can I possibly be if I have no free will? Or if the free will I have is merely an impression created by inattentiveness?' And they're good questions. Necessary questions. Generically the question becomes: "what is a human being from the point of view of action, volition, suffering and freedom?" Not from an organic, chemical or biological point of view but from a functional or deeper or spiritual point of view. What is a human being? What are we, uniquely, each one of us?

One of the terms that I sometimes like to use is an action potential configuration. I actually like to use terms that are quite clear but tend to produce no impression in the mind other than: what the fuck does that mean? Action potential is a biological term to do with the neuro-muscular system. So what does this term mean? If a human being is an action potential configuration, it's beginning to make the

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term 'human' being sound a little odd. Like something that we might find in an IT laboratory. But what is meant by this APC is that human beings act accordingly. They don't act randomly. From the outside it can look like they are. From the inside it can feel like we are. But actually we act accordingly.

The question is: according to what? The answer is: our action potential configuration. Which means what? It means that we've been configured to specific potential actions: which means that we are inclined to act in particular ways. But this inclination is very strict. It's not like: 'Well I feel a bit like rolling over and going back to sleep this morning.' So a better word than inclination would be 'impelled', 'compelled' to act accordingly, according to the structure of our configuration of potential to act.

The problem is that human beings, unlike laboratory participants, never encounter exactly the same situation again. Every situation that we're in always has new elements, even if it's the second of five surynamaskars, it's not the same as the third or fourth. We're not so awake, we're not so tired, it's not so cold; it's not so warm in the room. The moisture content has changed, our hydration level is different.

Every moment of human experience is totally and utterly unique no matter how many times the outer shell of it may have been experienced before. This makes it look like our responsiveness to situations is open-ended because we always respond to the supposedly same situation differently. But the situation is different and that's why the response is different. Not because we're choosing or selecting from a range of responses to a particular situation but because that particular situation is demanding, commanding, compelling us to act in a particular way: the exact way that we do act when we're in those exact circumstances.

The configuring of the action potentials of being human is a question of experience. Using Patanjali's terminology: the configuring is samskaras being organised into vasanas producing impulses (pratyahara) to perceive which produce impulses to act. The configuration potential that each one of us has in each moment to act is generated by our past experience organising itself around our genetic capacity. Our genetic capacity DNA is the result of the experience of 3500 million years of evolution. This is one hell of a configuration

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process. It's a very lengthy process of configuration upon which the action potential of a human being is organised.

This configuration is for each of us the fruit of experience. Each one of us has a unique configuration because each one of us has had a unique path out of those 3500 million years of evolution. But for most of those 3000 million years, our path was shared. And so to a great extent we respond very similarly to the same situations; although slightly differently because of the last 100,000, 50,000 or 25,000 years. We're not in a position to say when each one of us separated from that root of the origins of humanity into a stream or a branching that doesn't include anybody else in this room. It may have only been a thousand years ago we had a grand ancestor in common; it may be 50,000. It's not very long when you consider that the whole process of evolution has taken 3500 million years.

Nevertheless, every action that we've ever taken has been a unique response to a unique set of circumstances. No matter how similar that response might have been in a similar set of circumstances. Because of the similarity of responses in so many sets of circumstances, it can easily seem like we're not configured to act in a particular way but we're free to select between possibilities. But we have already seen that all actions are subject to a matrix of causality that extends back unbroken and unbreakable as far as the human mind in any of its capabilities can go. The word for this situation that we are all in that excites negativity is conditioning. We are conditioned by our own life experience, by our personal DNA, by the evolution of human DNA, by the conditions on this planet, by its place in the solar system, by the place of the solar system in the galaxy. We are conditioned uniquely so that no matter what the circumstantial situation is we have only one possible response. We deliver it willy-nilly whether or not we make a decision to do so or not, whether or not we make a decision to do so or not, whether the action happens spontaneously or after deliberation. We are conditioned totally.

A mind that is not courageous or secure enough to be ruthlessly and relentlessly curious can easily respond to such a statement, that being human is to be totally conditioned, with even an unconscious subliminal: 'but not completely.' This part that some minds would like to insist has not been conditioned within which human freedom supposedly resides has not been found, located or identified. It cannot be found, located or identified. It remains forever at best a

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hopeful and hopeless speculation. Yet, the sophisticated creativity of the human cortex that permits us such amazing imaginative possibilities continually generates the thought in our minds: 'Oh I shouldn't have done that / if only I had done that / if they hadn't done that...' 'If', 'but' and 'maybe' being the remit of the cortex. You know that feeling. It doesn't matter, maybe nobody else knows what you did, maybe nobody else knows what you said, but it was such a fucking stupid thing in hindsight. You cringe on the inside with embarrassment.

This is the 'if, but, maybe' syndrome, the opening of the door into the Blame Game. That doesn't mean that 'if, but, maybe' are wrong, that they don't belong. They belong, but not when thinking about the past in terms of what you might/should/could have done. 'If, but and maybe' are more for advanced planning. If I go left, I won't be able to go right but I won't have to carry this so therefore maybe I should leave it behind. Or something like that.

The delicious and delightful irony of the fact that being totally conditioned means we have no freedom to act or choose confers upon us the most amazing freedom. Not a freedom from hunger or thirst. Only death can bring that freedom. Not a freedom from the needs of the body, nor from the needs of the mind. But a freedom from a heavy heart. The kind of freedom that graced Arjuna in his chariot on that sunny day. We know it was a sunny day, not just because it happened in India, but because over in the distance lined up before him he could see the anxious and frightened faces of his very own cousins. And faced with the prospect of seeing one of those well known and deeply loved faces over the top of his arrow tip, knowing therefore that in a millionth of a second they would be dead as his right hand relaxed, Arjuna was plunged into a despair that we cannot possibly imagine the depths of. We may have had our own difficult moments in our life, and met them as he did with a heavy heart, though not that difficult I am sure. Yet he rode forth into battle not long later, with a light heart.

Freedom from a heavy heart, is the prize that comes from feeling beyond any doubt the shackles, the chain of your conditioning. But feeling without any doubt that these so called shackles, or chains, extending everywhere in every direction are actually the lattice of your freedom, not of your bondage. These chains are composed of links. The links being actions, each one of which in being totally inextricable from the indivisible totality of the matrix and being totally

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necessary to and inevitable, being totally irredeemable and inextricable had to happen, conditioning you to have a heavy heart or not, to let go of the bow string or not.

There is no escape for the human bodimind from conditioning. Its conditioning is its root, its life, its nature. But human beings as action potential configurations are not robots. They are not the kind of computer programme that we are used to. To imagine that to be configured by and to action as a human being in any way resembles a computer programme is a mistake. Human programming or human conditioning is totally open ended. It may have a root that goes back 3500 million years. It may have layers and layers and layers of deep code that cannot be changed that are totally fixed. But it also has at the surface a breadth and openness of programmability that beggars the imagination.

The possibilities of human action, the possibilities of human imagination are endless. We can't even imagine what they are. Which means that to the extent that we are alive, especially to the extent that we are curious, and therefore opening up constantly new avenues into life, we are being reconditioned, reprogrammed constantly. So there's no need to hold onto a picture, a snap-shot of your conditioning and say: 'Fuck, I don't wanna be like that so I'm just going to pretend I'm not conditioned because I don't like to be conditioned like that.'

Human conditioning is open ended to the extent that it produces openness in the action potential configuration; to the extent that it produces curiosity, to the extent that questions are still being asked. I know that many human beings stop asking questions very soon. You're taught to stop asking questions almost the first day you go to school. This conditioning is so deep that many people succumb to it by the time they leave. They've stopped asking questions so you could say their programming may well have come to a sticky end. And they stay like that more or less for the rest of their lives. But people who end up doing yoga are not normally numbered amongst them. They're coming out of some curiosity, some impulse that has not been conditioned out of them by school such as: 'I wonder if I can get rid of this cellulite.' Or, 'I wonder if I can end up as sexy as Derek Ireland.' Or, 'I wonder if I can improve my lot / establish a more creative relationship with life / become more comfortable in life.' 'I wonder if I can improve my karma' would be the coolest way to say it in certain circles.

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I'm just reminded of this story so I'm going to give myself a break from all this analysis. It happened at a meeting I went to with a certain amount of trepidation. I was a bit ill. I shouldn't have really got on the plane but I had to because circumstances were out of my control. There was a woman there who I was predisposed to be sympathetic to before I'd even got there as I'd been to her website. She was obviously having a hard time with the way the fitness industry was impacting on the world of yoga. She was suffering a lot. At a certain point she let out this desperate squeal of a question: 'Why is my life so hard and everybody else's so easy?'

There was someone else there whose life, at least apparently, was not so tricky. In response to her question he lengthened his spine, opened his chest and said: 'Because you have got something that you need to learn and when you've learnt it, your life will become easier'. He didn't say 'like mine.' I nearly fucking punched him but I contained myself as I didn't think it would go down very well. You can imagine that she went deeper into her feeling of discomfort on hearing this. That she was having bad karma because she was stupid. Because there was something about life that he understood that she did not. This is a very dangerous perspective, especially to interpret karma through. I did write them both an e-mail afterwards. I thought that was a better way to do it than to punch the guy.

I always find it rather funny, rather karmic that my dearly beloved John Lennon was shot dead outside his house having written that song 'Instant Karma'. Karma can look a little bit like a minefield if you're looking at it with wishful thinking, if you're looking at it with the hope of a more comfortable life. But what does karma mean? The word means 'action'. That's all it means. It's not some special esoteric principle hidden in the belly of life. It's the overt face of life unfolding: karma, action. When Jesus says: 'You reap what you sow,' this wasn't a particularly profound statement. Any farmer could have told you that. Except most of us are a long way from being farmers aren't we? Sometimes when we press the light switch it goes on and sometimes it doesn't. And there's absolutely no sense that we can make of it at all unless we've been a little bit curious and found out about electricity and breaker switches, fuses and corrosion.

Karma is not what you've got coming to you whether you're good or bad. Karma is not what you've got coming to you whether you

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understand the secrets of the universe or not. Karma is just what's happening everywhere all of the time. Actions following actions, being followed by actions endlessly with an inevitability to each one. With an inextricable inevitability to each one. There's no escape from inevitability. That's what inevitability means. If it was in the past it had to happen, if it's in the present it has to be happening and if it's in the future it has to happen. This is what inevitability means. This is what inextricability demands. This is what indivisible wholeness requires: inevitability.

There is no escape from inevitability; there is no escape from karma. There is no possible escape from conditioning. There is no possible escape from karma. Except a delusional one into the speculative fantasies of the infantile, childish mind. As TS Eliot noted, humanity cannot bear too much reality. So we're running off into the fantasies of the childish mind on a fairly regular basis. It should be no surprise that we accept so readily the conjurings of the childish mind about karma: that we can become free from it. That we can become so spiritual and wise that we can uncover that philosopher's stone of a question that the teacher on my left had not discovered (and as a result was still struggling) and that teacher on my right had discovered and so was sitting pretty. Well, I tell you, he didn't look so pretty to me.

But what does it matter if there's no escape from karma? Shall I put that question differently: who cares if there's no escape from karma? Who gives a shit? So I'm going to tell you another story. This story came by way of Ramesh but it's not about him. I don't know if it's an older story than that or if it's a story that came to him because of his teaching. There was a guru who had a very, very adept student and after years of study the student felt secure enough to leave his study and go off into the big bad world. But they kept up a correspondence which is the normal kind of chela/guru communication: chela wanted to tell the guru how deep his understanding has become and the guru responded accordingly, according to his conditioning.

After a long silence from the chela the guru became concerned that he had not heard from the chela for a long time. So he sent the chela a message saying: 'How is your understanding now?' Or, 'how is your life now?' And the response that came immediately back to the guru was: 'Who cares?' All of a sudden the chela had become the guru and the guru the chela. In seeing clearly not only the inex-

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tricable and inevitable nature of action, but the impersonal nature of action, by seeing the illusory nature of volition, no more doer can be identified. No more doers can anywhere be seen. There is no-one left to care about the evaluation of understanding, although caring, compassion will definitely remain. No one left to be concerned, to be troubled about what's coming, about karma's inevitable arrival. What this means is that there is no escape from karma.

But there is an escape from the pressure of karma in seeing that you're totally conditioned. You're so totally conditioned as a bodi-mind that there is no room left for an independent, autonomous doer, thinker, decider, chooser within that conditioned action potential configuration. There is no room for anyone to have any karma. The karma belongs to totality just as the actions belong to totality and just as the actions are delivered through specific instruments, the karma unfolds through specific instruments. But it points to nothing other than totality, the conditioned web of totality.

So the only possible freedom from conditioning, from karma, is the freedom that arises when you see that you are not the doer, the chooser, the decider. You are not what you had taken yourself to be. But seeing that you are not what you take yourself to be is a far deeper seeing than seeing the conditioned nature of all phenomena. Seeing through what you had taken yourself to be. Seeing through first of all your illusory freedom, seeing through volition, seeing through the self, seeing it to be the mirage that it is, must go deeper. Because there is more to being human than a body. There is more to being human than a mind and a body.

But this more to being human has never, ever surrendered itself, nor will it, to any laboratory experiment. It has never been seen, touched, heard or felt. And never will it be. It will never be subject to the quantification of the scientific method. It will never subscribe to the limitations of knowledge. But it is no less, even much more, a part of being human than the body part or the mind part. Most people know what you mean when you say body because bodies have been deeply subject to the quantitative method of science and knowledge. Most people have a rough idea of what you mean by mind. But many are the ideas and many are the terms that refer to this other aspect of being human. An aspect which also must be realised for freedom from conditioning, from karma to result. Which cannot mean the end of conditioning, nor can it mean the end of karma.

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It is this that you could say the lens of yoga points to. The lens of yoga is focused through the body and it's focused through the mind upon something, and by something, else. As long as you take yourself to be the bodimind, as long as you take yourself to be old or young, fat or short, tall or thin, curious or bored, intelligent or stupid, happy or sad, then karma is wrapping itself around you with unbreakable chains, heavy and dragging. This nameless aspect of being human, to which yoga points, is the great mystery or the greatest joke of all time.

So subtle in its nature; so universal in its nature, that its going unseen leaves us with only the bodimind to claim as our own. 'This is me, what I think, what I feel, what I have done, what I intend to do.' This is all that is left, a totally conditioned action potential configuration over which we have zero control. That's an absolute zero. That's not a zero qualified by any 'ifs buts or maybes' at all. And that's what we reduce ourselves to. That's what we have reduced ourselves to: a machine, a robot, having so deeply lost touch with what we actually are. Taking ourselves to be what we appear to be.

When we discover that what we appear to be is totally conditioned of course we're likely to freak out and resist. But if we are curious enough we'll keep on asking, questioning. That curiosity alone can perhaps bring us to what we actually are. Within that discovery, recovery, whatever words you'd like to use, there is no bondage of any kind. There is nothing bindable, nothing to be bound. There is no subject or object of any karma or any conditioning. Conditioning is still there, karma is still there but no one to whom it belongs.

But our identification with the mind, with our thoughts, feelings, plans, emotions, memories, intentions, desires and fears; and our identification with our body, with our experiences, capabilities and actions is so deep, so heavy and so strong that it is not enough to intellectually understand that we are not the body and not the mind. It doesn't help to be told that you are God if the weight of that identification is still bearing down upon you on the chains of conditioning and karma. The weight can only be dissolved directly.

The joke, the biggest joke of all time, is that you can do nothing to bring this about. That's only half a joke; what makes it funny is that it's being prevented from happening by everything that you're

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trying to do, by everything that you're seeking. There's nothing you need to do, there's nothing you can do to cut through the bonds of your identification with body and mind. There's no information that can help you to do something better that you've been doing. There's no suggestion that anybody can make for you to do something that you haven't yet done that can free you from the weight of identification with the body and with the mind. The only possibility is to let go or surrender all doing.

This cannot be done. You cannot 'do' surrender. You cannot 'do' letting go. It is an event that happens only as a result of clear seeing. Some people might like to use a heavy duty word and say 'insight.' Seeing clearly, seeing so deeply into that you see straight through. All that needs to be clearly, irrevocably, irrefutably seen is that within the conditioned nature of all phenomena there is no doer that needs to do anything. The doing is just happening. Not at random, not arbitrarily, but according to the configuration of karma: the totality of karma, the totality of the indivisible wholeness of it all.

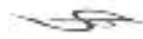
The joke is, every human being who is not struggling to survive, or who has come to the end of seeking, is seeking. They may not know what they are seeking. They may not realise that they are seeking: but we are all seeking the same thing. Call it freedom, call it peace, satisfaction, enlightenment. It doesn't matter what the word is. Some of us are still seeking it through money perhaps. Some of us are still seeking through pleasure, or a mixture perhaps. Some of us are perhaps seeking it through meditation. Some of us are perhaps seeking it through yoga. Some of us are perhaps seeking it through wrapping ourselves up in moral injunctions and ethical imperatives. Some of us are seeking it in books: holy books, erudite books, esoteric books, practical books.

The irony is that it's in that seeking that we lose touch with what we are seeking. We lose touch with what we are and we convince ourselves that we are the bodimind and that therefore the nature of our karma is important and we must rectify it as much and as soon as possible.



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LIVING IT



I'm going to use the word 'stickiness' to point to something fundamental to the process of life lived from the mind. The mind being a fruit of the cortex processing consciousness. The mind being the capacity human beings have to perceive and process so many perceptions. A capacity within which we are able recognise all kinds of possibilities. Possibilities about events that did, could, might, are or will be happening. This process happens for each one of us in the specific location of our own unique body. These perceptions are always associated with the same body. By the time you become adult your hands are definitively your hands. Likewise your feet, arms, face. Whenever you speak you recognise your own voice.

There is a deep consistency in that which is being perceived. This consistency in the flow of your perceptions creates what you could call a stickiness. This consistency of perceptions attaches to itself the assumption of a continuously existing perceiver. As a result of the decision making process the human cortex permits, this perceptual assumption is supplemented by an impression of volition. Both the consistency of perceptual experience and the impression of volition give rise to the impression of a perceiver, a decider, a thinker, a feeler, a controller: a self.

This impression cannot be eradicated, though it can be seen through. Consistency of perceptual content is a given. It's given by embodiment; it's given by the particular peculiarity of each human organism. This sense of self gives the impression of making the decision, and that it brings with it the weight and burden of choosing and deciding. Nevertheless, despite its conviction and intensity, it is merely an impression. Moreover it is an impression reinforced by consistency of experience and of reaction to external circumstances. The continuity of all these impressions moment by moment suggests that there's someone there.

To suggest that there is nothing there is obviously ridiculous. There's obviously something here. Especially if you consider that your thoughts are perceived only by you and cannot be perceived by anyone else. Your feelings may be expressed but can only be felt by you directly. Your choices can be recognised by others perhaps, but

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are only made by you. There is definitely something very specific, very unique, very particular going on inside each of us. The question upon which freedom, peace and trust hinges is: "what is it that's going on in here?" What is it that says 'I am bored;' 'I am interested;' 'I've had enough of this;' 'I'm going to go for that now'?

That there is something in here doesn't mean it is what we take it to be. Nor does it mean it is what society insists that it is. Nor what society requires us to assume it is or act as if it is. If we are unable to associate rain with wetness; if we are unable to associate snow with coldness; or sun with heat we're not going to be able to survive. If we are not able to associate actions with their instruments, society cannot survive. Actions do come through particular instruments, particular agents, particular human beings. But as we've already seen, that which comes extends back far beyond the particularities of that human agency or instrument.

Human beings are not like tigers. We cannot survive alone. We need to belong. For this we need to be accountable. We need to know where we stand with each other. The sense of self and the impression of volition are necessary to our survival. Human beings require society in order to survive. This intense impression is one that we are all subject to; even those who pretend to have killed the self. It is not one we need to escape from. It's not one that needs to be abandoned. We don't need to abandon decision making; as many people try to do when they only superficially see the impersonal nature of all phenomena and the illusory nature of volition.

There's no need to try to escape from the sense of self. There's no need to try to escape from having to, needing to, even wanting to, make decisions. But the making of these decisions and the taste of the self can become much lighter, much sweeter if they're contextualised within a clear, deep seeing of that which is actually happening. That which is actually happening is the conditioned impersonal and inescapable matrix of cause and effect. To the extent that this matrix is clearly seen, the sense of self withers organically. The impression of volition fades, naturally. You don't need to do anything with or to your recognition of the interconnected, impersonal, conditioned nature of all phenomena.

Let's say you've been happily involved in a loving relationship for years, and you walk around the corner and you find your beloved in a deep and passionate embrace with another. There's nothing that

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you need to do to that recognition to change your understanding of that relationship; and like as not bring it to an end. It will just happen according to your deeper beliefs and attitudes. Your trust will have been broken, and you will act accordingly.

Clear seeing produces its own result. Your friends could have been telling you for weeks that he was having an affair, and you refusing to believe it because you haven't seen it clearly for yourself. But as soon as you do see it clearly for yourself, that's it. Nothing needs to be done. The doing happens naturally as a result of the seeing. So it's the same when you see the true nature of action: the conditioned nature of all actions. When you see the true, impersonal, conditioned nature of all phenomena, to the extent that you see that clearly, things change.

Amongst those things that change two are at the very root of the others. Your relationship to decision making and your relationship to your sense of self both change, organically and naturally. It's not a test, it's not an examination. It's a natural functioning of being human. What we seek and call awakening, freedom, is the naturally mature human state. Human beings, the human body-mind, life itself, is designed to produce it if it's not interfered with. But of course that interference is very deep: it begins when we're infants.

To become free from that interference is not necessarily an easy matter. But it's not a complicated one. It's simply a matter of seeing things clearly. It is easy to see the surface of things clearly. In order to see beyond surface appearances, all you need to do is look closely, deeply and consistency. Without looking there can be no seeing. Without seeing there can be no freedom. With seeing nothing else needs to be imposed. Everything else unfolds organically according to the unfolding of the greater circumstances within which that seeing and that looking take place.

The transformation that takes place in your sense of self and your experience of making decisions is one which you experience less stickiness. We are no longer bogged down by the stickiness which is everywhere when we're only seeing things superficially. When we are attributing actions to instruments, causation to intent. When we are identifying people with a limited number of actions that we've experienced them by. That is stickiness. When we are sticking labels on others and feelings on ourselves. We are attaching blame and guilt to our own actions, to other people's actions.

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'So and so is so and so. I am so and so.' As if we did not all contain within us the full and unlimited range of human tendency and capability. Which we all do. We can all be mean, we can all be kind. We are all sometimes mean; we are all sometimes kind. We can all be impatient and we can all be patient. And if it just so happens that your experience of a particular person is that they're always mean and impatient when you're around, instead of considering that it might be something to do with you, you think that it's something to do with them, that they're mean and impatient. This is what I mean by stickiness. An expression of the word stickiness is used a lot by the Buddha: 'clinging,' 'grasping.'

This stickiness loosens when the totally conditioned nature of all phenomena is seen clearly. This clarity is a result of close and direct looking and nothing else (not a result of information, knowledge or intelligence). As this stickiness loosens everything lightens. The need to make decisions doesn't go away. The desire to make the right decision doesn't go away. But what 'right' begins to mean is what you would most like, if it's possible. Because we are always subject to the organic cellular imperative to become as comfortable, safe and stable as possible. In other words, to enjoy our life is a fundamental imperative.

Therefore our decision making always hinges upon that, however subtly. Every decision we make is an invitation to bring us closer to at least a moment's satisfaction and peace. This also does not change. The need to make decisions and the basis on which decisions are made does not change. Nor do the contributing factors change. The contributing factors to your decisions are your conditioning and circumstances. Circumstances are circumstances and they provide the very specific stimuli to which you respond with your conditioning. Your conditioning is the result of your past experience in combination with your genetic legacy, if there is such a thing as your karma left over from another life that's part of your conditioning and that can't change. Your past is your past; your DNA is your DNA. Your experience is your experience and your conditioning is your conditioning.

But new experiences are changing your conditioning. That happens anyway regardless of what you see. So that doesn't change in the clear seeing of the conditioned nature of all phenomena. But what does change is the operating of your conditioning. The need

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to make decisions and the desire that those decisions should be beneficial becomes lighter, more playful. Less fuss is invested in the making of the decision and the desire that the outcome should result in your favour.

So you could say, 'you start to live your life making decisions as if you were in control of your life but knowing that you are not.' And knowing that you are not in control of your life allows you to be relaxed about the making of decisions. But it doesn't take the need to make decisions away. The need to make the decisions in the privacy of your own mind, no matter how often that you articulate them, gives the impression that you are making the decision. It gives the impression that you are living your life. Knowing that you're not in control of your life invites you to make decisions more lightly, less problematically. This word 'knowing' doesn't mean having the concept that you're not in control of your life. It means having seen it so clearly that it is actually your fundamental disposition and attitude towards life regardless of any conceptualisation. It's not difficult to speak as if with wisdom. But without wisdom it is difficult to act lightly and without stickiness.

You know what I mean by stickiness. Is anybody married? If anybody's married then you just substitute husband when I say boyfriend. You know I'm sure once or twice in your relationship your boyfriend has done something that's upset you, however superficially. Maybe he just put the keys in the wrong place or didn't put the toilet seat down. Or he didn't come home until six hours after he said he would. Or he came home drunk when he said he wouldn't. Or whatever. Stickiness is when you're still in reaction to that the next day, the next hour, the next minute. And in being stuck in that reaction you've totally forgotten your love. You've totally forgotten why they're your boyfriend.

So this stickiness becomes unsticky. The glue is loosened with the clear seeing that results from direct looking at the way actions come about, the way choices and decisions are made. This produces, without any effort required, a clear seeing of the conditioned nature of all phenomena. The decision making process that we can't escape from, the sense of self that that decision making always produces becomes lighter or more transparent. You can see through the need to make a decision to the fact that whatever decision you're about to make has already been determined.

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Not only that, whatever outcome results from your decision has already been determined. There's nothing that you can do to make it be otherwise. There's nothing that you can not do to make it be otherwise. Everything that you don't do and everything that you do do will be contributing to it being just like that. But of course you don't know yet what it is going to be. But because of your ability to look back at the past and see the same dynamic happening there you know that same dynamic is happening also into the future. Therefore you can become relaxed, light, unsticky, spacious or playful.

Very often people ask a question when being exposed to this particular perspective of life. 'Well what should I do then if I'm not in control of my life? What should I do then if there is no such thing as volition?' And of course it's a false question. The question itself indicates that very little seeing has happened, that very little clarity has taken place, that there's perhaps just been an intellectual discussion going on in the mind. Seeing clearly is more fundamental than an intellectual process, even though it may involve intellectualisation. When it's seen clearly that you are not the doer, that there is no volition, self, decider, thinker, such a question cannot arise: 'well what should I do then?'

'What should I do now?' is a question that cannot be avoided. But 'what should I do about my life now that I've become wise? What should I do about my life now that I've understood the illusory nature of volition?' is a question that indicates that you haven't. Because from within the clear seeing of the illusory nature of volition, the conditioned, impersonal nature of all phenomena, it's clearly seen that the happening of life is just that. A happening that's going to happen, that has been happening and it is happening according to the agency of the totality of the unfolding of the universe, or God.

And what you do or what you call 'what you do' is going to come out of your body and out of your mind as a result of that totality, regardless of you asking somebody for a formula. 'What should I do?' 'How can I solve the problem of life?' You can't solve what is not a problem. What is not a problem does not need a solution. The problem is just thinking that there is a problem. 'What should I do if there's no such thing as volition, if all phenomena are conditioned?' You're about to find out. Moment by moment you're finding out regardless of your understanding. This is no different. What you are

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going to do is determined by what's already happened in the universe coalescing thorough you as it always has been and as it always will be.

With the clear seeing of that, with the unstickiness that can happen, you can taste a deep relaxation. Not only about the decisions that you have to make but also becoming deeply relaxed about the impulses, the forces and the factors operating within you that lead to these decisions. In other words you begin to come to a deep acceptance of your conditioning, of who and what you are, having recognised that who and what you are is a totally conditioned and impersonal expression of the totality of the functioning of the universe. And that you are totally and utterly necessary to that functioning.

It doesn't matter how fucked up you think you are. It doesn't matter how fucked up you've been told that you are. For anybody to be seen to be fucked up, this can only happen from a fucked up perspective. From the perspective from which volition is taken to be real, the self is taken to exist and blame and guilt are the currency of that perspective. Somebody who tells you you're fucked up is usually trying to make you feel bad about something, even if it's said in such a way as, 'well you're fucked up but I can help you.'

The perspective of the conditioned nature of all phenomena is a perspective that once it has been seen clearly it can never be abandoned. Just as once it's been clearly seen that the sun does not rotate around the earth but that the earth spins around the sun, there's no going back. There's absolutely no possibility of saying honestly to yourself once you've seen the evidence that it's the other way round. Of course for those who haven't seen the evidence, they can make it any way they like but Copernicus and Galileo lived and the proof is there. We don't have to go out into space to know that it's like that. They didn't. Newton didn't.

Same when you see the conditioned nature of all phenomena. When you see it clearly it doesn't matter how many people who have not seen it clearly would like to debate about it and try to argue otherwise. There is no going back and what this means is that there is no going back to blame. There's no going back to shame, guilt, manipulation, pride etc. Within this lightening, unstickiness, relaxation: call it what you will; spaciousness, clarity, transparency, you begin to accept that you're not fucked up. That your desire or need

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for whatever is an expression of the functioning of the totality of the universe. Even if you don't like that desire and its result. So it is no longer possible to make you feel bad about your behaviour, even when you don't like it.

Yet we seem to love to make each other feel bad about our behaviour, our thoughts even. It's very easy to turn somebody into a slut, for example, or a liar. Has anybody never lied? I doubt it and yet we're willing to turn some people into liars. This is stickiness. Lying happens. As you probably know in most cases lying happens despite our best intentions. Lying doesn't normally happen because we intend it to; sometimes it just does. If you're afraid that you will be judged because you like money or sex or drugs or The Sex Pistols. If you're afraid of that then you're likely to lie and go to war with yourself.

But when you see the totally conditioned nature of all phenomena, the impulse to go to war with yourself diminishes. You start to be more comfortable with your conditioning, even if you're conditioning is such that you are afraid to be clearly seen and therefore you lie about who and what you are, which most of us do. The impulse to make yourself acceptable to others diminishes when you've recognised that you're already supported by the totality of the universe. The narrow mindedness of a few human beings becomes irrelevant, even if they happen to be your mother or your father or your brother, sister, son or daughter.

So within this process of lightening up, not taking things so personally or seriously you still have to make decisions all the time. Because you're an intelligent human being you're perfectly aware that the result of your decisions can go in your favour or against your favour and likewise towards everybody else. So it becomes slightly complicated or it remains slightly complicated making decisions. But only to the extent that you're concerned with the outcome. By concern I mean heavily invested in a particular outcome. And you're only concerned with the outcome if you've not understood the conditioned nature of all phenomena.

Obviously you would have a preference towards a particular outcome. That preference would always be more pleasure, security and stability for you and for everybody else, especially those that you love. This is inevitable, we always operate like this. This is what we want. Peace on earth is fundamental to the human heart.

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Nevertheless, having seen the conditioned nature of all phenomena, we realise that in a way it doesn't matter what we decide because what we decide has already been determined. We don't have to decide what to decide. Then decision making can become very easy. Here's a choice: make it. Here's another choice: make it. And as we already know, most of the choices we make don't come to fruition anyway. So why do we make such a fuss about our making the right choice? Our making the choice has got so little to do with the outcome anyway.

One of the implications of this perspective is that you might as well relax about who you are. You might as well relax about your conditioning, your impulses and desires and see if you can fulfil them: lightly. Andrea revealed that he came here to these highly supportive circumstances with the intention of giving up chocolate. Now you can hardly imagine a better place to give up eating chocolate. And this failed. This doesn't mean that he just failed once. It means that he failed every single day. This doesn't mean he ate chocolate everyday but it never came to be that he'd given up eating chocolate. As your understanding of the conditioned nature of phenomena deepens, these kinds of things don't stop happening. But they become more and more amusing and enjoyable as you watch your helplessness unfolding. As you see that more you start to ask less of yourself and of others: even if you're actually overtly asking them to do things because life requires it. But you ask more lightly. You're not going to punish them for failing by withholding your love, attention, smile or however it is you punish people for failing you.

You could well imagine that if you've got a whole bunch of people in a limited area enquiring into the possibility of living like this it becomes a lot of fun. It becomes amazingly easy to live with human beings from this perspective. That's why Sara doesn't want to leave. Not because she isn't excited about the prospects of what might be out there but just because it is very pleasant to live in an atmosphere where you're not going to be rejected for what you do. Of course you can cook a bad meal while you're here, but you can't fuck up. Of course you can forget to clean a dome, but you can't fuck up.

We were taught from a very young age to be deeply afraid of fucking up. We were taught that fucking up might lead to total rejection and deep down all human beings know they cannot survive alone. They cannot survive total rejection. In Africa if somebody

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breaks the taboos of the tribe, they don't punish them. They just excommunicate them, send them out, and then they die because they cannot survive alone. They have the hunting skills, fire burning skills, all the skills to survive. But they cannot survive alone.

So the practical implications of the clear seeing of the conditioned and impersonal nature of all phenomena are really rather mundane, prosaic. And I will quote an Indian sage again. The implications are: 'do whatever you feel like, lightly.' Because it doesn't really matter what you feel like. You will do what's already been determined for you to do. So if you try to do what you feel like too enthusiastically or intently and it's not already written, you're going to be pissed off. If you spend agonising minutes and hours trying to work out what would be the best thing to do and working it out, figuring it out, you might find out that it was not the thing that you were pre-determined for you to do.

In other words you could see that the clear seeing of the conditioned nature of all phenomena is just to allow decisions to make themselves. They are already making themselves. But it's to allow them to make themselves, to recognise that they are making themselves. To recognise that a decision doesn't necessarily have anything to do with its intended outcome. And we normally make decisions do we not, in order to bring about an intended outcome. So it is the outcome actually that we should be concerned with. But if we recognise that the outcome is already written then we don't have to worry about the outcome either. Then we can just enjoy the process and the humour to be found in the total irrelevance that so many decisions have to the outcome.

So for example, let me just take Pelle or Melodi or Lara. From a conventional point of view their life has been put on hold so that they can sit up a mountain and listen to my nonsense on a regular basis. It's quite likely that they're going to occasionally wonder: 'what should I do with myself when I leave?' 'What should I do with myself next year?' This may be infecting Sara more as she's about to leave. She doesn't really need to worry about it. It's already coming. But if she is worrying about it, it's because it's written that she should worry about it. Her worrying is the result of the totality of the universe coalescing through her in that moment of worry.

So you can even become relaxed about worrying, let alone about decision making. You can equally become relaxed about blaming

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and feeling guilty. These things too, if they are happening had to happen. They were coerced, forced, to happen by the unfolding of the whole universe. Therefore they cannot be said to be wrong, to be an error.

So one of the most fundamental implications of this perspective is you cannot fuck up, you have not fucked up, you will not fuck up. You have never made a mistake; you are not making a mistake; you will never make a mistake and nor has anybody else. In other words, you are just as you are, with your conditioning just as it is, totally and utterly perfect. That doesn't necessarily mean totally and utterly to you liking. But if it's not totally and utterly to your liking, that's just a symptom of being caught in the stickiness of the personal perspective where volition is taken to be real. But to the extent that you see the impersonal nature of all phenomena; the illusory nature of volition; the conditioned nature of all things; despite having preferences, as you must, you're going to end up feeling perfect as well as seeing your perfection.

What are you thinking?

Nothing! For a few moments there were no thoughts.

And then a thought?

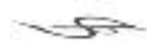
I was thinking whether I had a question but I haven't!

And that thought just popped into your mind didn't it? You didn't ask it to be there. You can't possibly ask a thought to come because you would have had to have thought it before you thought it. And you can't think a thought before you think it. So this is clear. You're not in control of your mind. And if you're not in control of your mind you can't possibly be in control of your life because your actions are based on decisions that are made in your mind that you're not in control of. So you can relax. It doesn't matter if your mother, father, sister, brother, auntie, uncle, best friend tell you otherwise. What you've seen for yourself you've seen for yourself.

The only reason other people haven't seen it is because they haven't looked. It's not because they're stupid and it's certainly not because they're not interested. Everybody is interested in being free from blame, from the sense of not being perfect. Everybody. But most people are looking in the wrong directions. They're looking to

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Freud, St Augustine, St Paul, Mohammed, to Buddha instead of looking to themselves, to what is actually happening within them and seeing it clearly.



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BLAME GAME



The Blame Game is predicated on an assumption that does not withstand the light of awareness, that can not withstand effective scrutiny. This assumption underpinning the tragedy of the Blame Game is that human beings are in control of their lives, their thoughts, their desires, their choices, their decisions, their actions. This assumption is implicit in conventional culture, in popular and professional psychology and hidden within most presentations of the spiritual path. This assumption about human experience expresses itself in what Patanjali calls *Abhinivesa* or 'claiming life'. Claiming life as if it were your own, as if life were your own doing is what is meant by 'self clinging'. It is the means by which the self is conjured out of the movement of action and reaction.

This is the conventional perspective to which all contemporary, and most historical, cultures subscribe. A perspective which we can call the Claim Frame. This claiming of the eventuality of life as our own is expressed in so many ways. Ways in which we interpret, understand, reflect upon and express our experience. How many times we say things like, "Well I've changed I'm not like that anymore." "They have changed." "She's no longer the person she was." These are expressions of the Claim Frame, the perspective of objects owning their actions. All of which phrases imply that the instrument is in charge of its actions, is responsible for its decisions. Whereas in fact action, and the underlying decision making processes, are not so much a product of objects, as the nature of objects is created by their actions. We are so object obsessed that the true nature of action goes unnoticed and overlooked despite whatever conceptual understanding of the conditioned nature of phenomena we might have.

Human life is not just a simple matter of making choices, taking decisions and acting on the basis of them, and then living with the consequences. Both the Greeks and the Romans had a sophisticated understanding of the subtleties and universality of forces underpinning, and even determining, our actions. From this perspective there was recognition, explicit or implicit, that human beings are not really in control of their lives. Rather that human beings are at the mercy of the Gods. This does not simply mean that if Zeus starts to

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feel frisky and needs to discharge a few thunderbolts and you happen to be in the way you're going to get fried.

Perhaps the Greeks and Romans had some sense that being human is to be a conscious puppet driven by forces and factors originating in the unseen. The causation of these forces and factors is impossible to clearly, effectively and definitively discern. In these cultures there was a sense that forces or energies, which they call Gods, could take hold of people, individuals or in mass, and determine their actions.

The Greeks had this tendency to personify all their Gods whereas the Romans didn't. Some Roman Gods were vague ephemeral forces that did certain things that took events in particular directions. I would like to refer to these Gods with the Sanskrit term Karma Vayu 'the winds of action'. If we shift our perspective away from the tendency to attribute instruments with ownership of their actions, and consider instead that perhaps our instrumentality is motivated from without even though it may be configured from within. Then this concept of Karma Vayu or 'winds of action' can be very fruitful.

It reminds me of a lesson I received from my cousin Jenny. One day at a family dinner while her sister Lucy was pontificating dogmatically about Scientology, I made a very negative and judgemental defining statement about Lucy to Jenny. Jenny turned to me with a tender and compassionate look and said, "Godfrey, that is not Lucy, that is just something that is currently taking her." And I was struck in that moment, without having any of these concepts, of how deeply true that was. Leonard Cohen likes to put it like this, "I am not the one who loves - it is love that seizes me". This seems to me to be very like the Greek and Roman attitude to the Gods. The recognition of primal, universal forces and energies that are dancing around the planet getting hold of whatever they can to express themselves.

Sometimes you may find yourself all of a sudden reacting in an unusual way. All of a sudden you may find yourself constantly thinking about something you don't normally think about. As like as not you're going to take it personally and define yourself by it. Even if only momentarily. As like or not you're going to say, "Oh, I'm become weird, I'm obsessed with sex", or money, or whatever it is. Whereas in fact it may be more accurate to see it the other way

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round. That you've been taken by something and you're expressing it in your own unique way according to your own conditioned action potential configuration. So perhaps it's not so much that people change in the way that we normally understand it. It's not that we are somebody who's interested in train-spotting who then becomes interested in yoga. Rather circumstances change and we reflect those changes.

The circumstances of being human are more subtle than meets the eye. There is more to being human than skin and bone, connective tissue, nerves and blood. This more to being human was being expressed by the Greeks and Romans in what they called their Gods. A perspective which has been replaced by the monopoly of the scientific method. A perspective which insists that only that which can be measured exists. That only that which can be perceived in a controlled consistent and verifiable way is real. So we live in a culture in which all that cannot be quantified according to the scientific method has been reduced to fantasy.

So then these forces and factors which have direct bearing on the experience of being human, in being denied are forced to function in the dark. They function unseen, unrecognised and in that darkness we claim their functioning as our own. "I am the one who loves," we say, "I am the great lover," "I am the not very good lover." Anyone who has enough experience of love or sex knows that such a statement is absurd: that love, sex are a function of a dynamic that goes far beyond the obvious interaction of two people. So when we speak of someone in such terminology as, "she is confused," or "he is an aggressive person," this is the Claim Frame. And it is a very short step from the Claim Frame to the Blame Game. There may be no overt blaming in it. But because of the implicit attitude of ownership, if that difference starts to bother you, impose on you, it can easily produce blame.

If you take a look at what happened in Germany in the 20's and the 30's you see something absolutely phenomenal happening there. Something which leads some people to feel and say they don't like Germans. To believe that these actions define Germans in a particular and detrimental way. Of course German people do have specific characteristics that differ from people from Papua New Guinea. Climate, location, diet affects one's conditioning, one's propensity to act in particular ways.

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Nevertheless, powerful and unusual forces and factors were bearing down upon the German speaking, having been humiliated and fragmented at the end of the First World War. The attitude of the victors to the defeat of the Germany in the 1st World War was extreme. Territories were taken away, capabilities removed, reparations imposed. As a result Hitler could do what he did because the whole of the German nation was in the grip of something unusual and spectacular.

Something that was not an expression of the Germans being somehow specially fucked up and aggressive in a way that other nations are not. You only have to look at the history of the British Empire, the Spanish Empire or the French and Italian attempt to establish Empire to see that that can't be true: and see that these kinds of atrocities that were perpetrated by the Germans are perpetrated by all nations in certain circumstances. It just so happened that the confluence of circumstances in the 20th century were such that they'd never been done on such a scale because the technological possibilities for doing so had not been available. You could say the German nation was gripped by a Karma Vayu. A Karma Vayu of desperation, that came from having lost their pride and sense of nationhood.

The fact that you might feel anger a lot doesn't mean that you are an angry person. It just means that you, as a bodimind, are exposed to those stimulations that produce anger in you. Every bodimind has a predisposition towards anger; every bodimind has a predisposition towards kindness; every bodimind has a predisposition towards every possible human experience.

We're all capable of going in many different directions and whether we do or not is not so much a function of what we are as of what touches us. So you can spend 6 months, 2 years, completely free from dysfunctional thinking. And if you're still actually in its grip you may say, "Ha, I am free from dysfunctional thinking." Then circumstances change and all of a sudden dysfunctional thinking manifests itself again because of changing circumstances because you came off the mountain, out of the ashram, back to London. Or perhaps you just went to have tea with your mother or perhaps you saw your ex-boyfriend in the street.

Things happen and the most honest thing you can say about them is you don't know why they happened. You don't know why

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somebody is behaving in a different way. You don't know why you're behaving in a different way. You don't know why somebody who used to say nice things to you seems to be ignoring you. You don't know why somebody who used to ignore you constantly seems to be saying unpleasant things to you. But on the basis of this implicit assumption underpinning the Blame Game, that human beings are in control of their lives, actions, choices and decisions, you interpret and you say, "Ah, this person doesn't like me anymore... oh this person likes me now... this person's beginning to see me clearly now."

What is Christopher? What is Zoe? Not a human being. Not a body. Not a body-mind. Christopher, Zoe, Olivia, Laura... These are labels. Names. They point in a very specific direction, but that's about it. They point to a location and that's about it. If I say Chris is compulsive obsessive about cleanliness, this is defining nothing other than the limitations of my understanding. This is defining a box with which I want to nail Christopher down. This word Chris just points in a particular direction, but we all want to turn it into a coffin. Of course when you look in that direction you see a particular shape or form or appearance.

And of course Christopher the label is pointing to something. Something which I'm calling a mobile actionawareness location. That which is being pointed at is a conditioned and aware action potential configuration. But the depth, the sophistication, the complexity of that configuration is beyond any comprehension. It's beyond anybody's ability to accurately define. The possibilities of behaviour, hard wired, soft wired and in any other way wired into Christopher are beyond quantitative analysis.

Olivia asked me yesterday, "Do you ever get embarrassed?" Well of course historically I've been embarrassed. Do I ever feel awkward? Historically I've felt awkward. The fact that I haven't felt awkward or embarrassed for a while means nothing except embarrassing or awkward circumstances have not impinged themselves upon me for a while. So if I say, "No I don't get embarrassed. No, I don't feel awkward," that's a lie. It's a double lie. It's a lie because I don't know what's going to happen and it's more deeply a lie because it implies that I have some fixed identity and I don't. My so-called identity is a response to circumstance. And of course my response to those circumstances is not yours so it's different but it's not part of a fixed identity. Sometimes you are awkward and sometimes you are confident. Which one are you going to choose?

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If we're a bit down on ourselves or pessimistic we'll choose the negative one and if we're a bit more optimistic and positive we'll choose the positive one. So I'll say, "I'm very confident," whereas you might say, "I'm rather awkward." But actually we both manifest awkwardness and confidence depending upon circumstance. The winds of awkwardness can blow through anyone and the winds of confidence can blow through anyone and the winds of anger, lust, rage, confusion can blow through anyone if the circumstances are conducive to that.

Very often when people live closely together something strange happens. The divisions, the separations between these different mobile action potential locations with their separate labels begin to become blurred. So sometimes you might find yourself feeling, thinking saying something that actually means nothing to you. This often takes the form of asking a question you know the answer to. Your knowing the answer means it is not a question you need to ask. It is not therefore your question. Yet this question needed to be asked. So it looked for the most ready mouth to ask it for whatever reason you can but guess.

When Paul was here he was constantly asking questions. Very often the same question in different forms. He may well have been under the impression that they were his questions. You may well have been under the impression that they were his questions. You may have thought that they were telling you something about him. Well maybe they were but that doesn't mean they were his questions. Nor does it mean they were speaking only for or from him. It only means that these questions needed to be asked. That they needed to be heard being asked by those who heard them asked, and to be heard being answered by those who heard them answered: because that's what happened.

They were asked, they were answered and the asking and the answering were heard. Even if the hearing involved a misinterpretation that misinterpretation, because it happened, was necessary. Actions belong to their winds rather than to their instruments. Aggressive actions belong to the wind of anger, kind actions to the wind of love. The wind of love and the wind of anger just use whatever instrument they can find to express themselves. They need to express themselves no less than you do. That's the nature of energy. That's the nature of life: self-expression. We've become so sup-

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posedly sophisticated in our ability to dissect, analyse and quantify reality that we've lost sight of these Gods. We've lost touch with these winds and we're attributing their power, their agencies to ourselves and in doing so become trapped in the Blame Game.

When Leonard Cohen says, "I am not the one who loves, 'tis love that seizes me," he then says something else with extra dimensions: "When hatred and his package come you refuse delivery." By which he means he is no longer able to bear the fruits of the winds of hatred to claim them as his own. This doesn't necessarily mean that they don't blow through him. Why not? What would your response be if you saw someone you loved being hacked to death? Would your response be love, laughter, anger or despair? Or would that response just be the triggering of an action potential and not yours at all?

This is what Leonard Cohen means: to see that love, hatred, whatever is not yours at all and you don't have to lay claim to it. You don't have to hold onto it and burden your heart with things that don't belong to it. Within the recognition of the conditioned and impersonal nature of all phenomena, the winds of action, Karma Vayu, begin to be felt. Then perhaps when you feel them you can sometimes duck and be missed by them. And perhaps not. Sometimes they take you. But, from this perspective, when being taken by them, then as soon as they drop you, you will drop them.

Last night Pelle says to me "Melodi's always trying to get me to do things I don't want to do." This is the Blame Game. Subtle though it may be, no anger involved necessarily, no animosity involved. But if you go putting a label on somebody as in "this is what they do, this is what they are", sooner or later you're going to blame them for being like that. You could say that Melodi, not unlike myself, has a propensity to be enjoyed by the winds of provocation and so when the winds of provocation blow it finds a resting place in her as it finds one only too easily in me. But if you were to say that I am provocative or that Melodi is provocative to somebody in whose presence circumstances were such that neither I nor Melodi had ever manifest provocation they would think that you did not know us, that you were wrong to say we were like that.

Sometimes we act like that, sometimes you act like that. The action does not belong to the instrument. You could say the action ultimately belongs to the Gods - whichever God or wind is blowing

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that way that day. And you know what this is like. Sometimes everybody in this house is in a certain vibrational spectrum. Then another day we're all within another vibrational spectrum and all our actions are being modified and determined by forces and factors within that particular spectrum.

You could say that is what happened in Germany in the 20's and 30's but on a devastating scale. It's only too easy to attribute the Holocaust to Hitler, Himmler and a few others and fall devastatingly into the Blame Game. That very Blame Game is playing itself out in another way in Israel. The conditioning to which Israeli children are subject with regard to the Holocaust, with regards to the German nation is as atrocious as the conditioning to which the German children in the thirties were subject to regarding Jews.

The very same kinds of conditioning that Palestinian children are subject to with regard to Israelis. A Palestinian child has no choice but to grow up hating Israelis unless unusual, mitigating circumstances somehow impose themselves upon their enculturation. And vice versa. So Israelis and Palestinians see each other as hostile and dangerous. Whereas the fact is that most of them are not; on both sides. You can see the same thing in the Balkans, Northern Ireland. Why not in Bournemouth? What's the difference? Circumstance. The stock, the human being, is the same.

The roots of the Blame Game are deep and subtle but because they are delusional only too easily uprooted. It can take a great deal of effort to fabricate a comprehensive deception. For example, if you have an affair while being involved with somebody else. The effort involved in fabricating the impression that you are not doing it accumulates and accumulates as unbearable pressure and tension. Yet it just takes your boyfriend to walk round the wrong corner at the wrong moment and in one second the whole fabrication comes tumbling down in the light of truth, in the light of clear seeing of something actually happening.

In the light of clear seeing of the conditioned and impersonal nature of all phenomena the roots of the Blame Game dissolve. They dissolve because they are just a mirage. It is a mirage that human beings are in control of their minds, their life, their choices, their decisions and their actions. A mirage that is dispelled by clear seeing. Clear seeing which results from deep and persistent looking at,

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not for, looking at: at whatever. Looking at anything, looking at everything. Looking. Drushti until you see through paridrsto.

If black ink and white paper meet it is the end of white paper but not of black ink. The Blame Game is like that. It takes over and obscures everything. Even love can be sacrificed to the tyranny of the Blame Game. The Blame Games is nothing other than total and utter delusion. It rules warfare, it rules terrorism, it rules anti-terrorism, it rules society, it rules the legal system, it rules working relationships, it rules family relationships, it rules friendships, it rules romantic relationships. It rules and it determines them; and it destroys them more or less.

How few relationships last a life time. How very, very few. And yet life has given us all for the benefit each other. Yet we insist on fighting with each other, competing with each other, living against each other. Turning our friends into our enemies, turning our loved ones into people that hate us. This is the Blame Game. If you're being played by the Blame Game you are suffering whether you know it or not, whether you admit it or not.

We are very complacent about the word love. It is used to describe, and even sanctify, all kinds of feelings. Feelings which range from the sublime to the absurd and claim those four letters with an equal authority. But rare is the feeling, rare is the situation that deserves the word love. True Love is based on wisdom. Genuine love is based on deep insight into the true nature of reality. A depth of insight that elucidates not only the conditioned and impersonal nature of all phenomena, but also their singular origin and nature. Without such insight love is just a slogan, a badge. Without such wisdom love can not last. A Love that is not based on an awareness of The One in everything will not endure. A love that is not based on an awareness of the inherent unity of all life soon fades. A love that is not based on true understanding is fragile indeed.

Of course genuine love that endures is possible. For this is nothing other than the natural and organic function of the human heart. Yet the love that arises inevitably and naturally from the human heart is rare. This natural, organic love arises on the basis of a deep awareness of the true nature of all phenomena. An awareness that depends entirely on the deep and detailed recognition of the impersonal nature of conditioned phenomena. It is rare because the necessary depth of insight is uncommon. The conventional mind is

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caught deeply in the grip of the Claim Frame. Identifying objects by their actions. Attributing action to their instruments. Interpreting everything from a volitional, personal perspective. This leads only to being played by the Blame Game.

When this deep insight is absent, then there is nothing but fragile love to cling to: nothing but transient love to hope for: nothing but contractual love to secure by any means possible. The means used to secure this kind of fragile love is nothing other than the Blame Game. In this kind of love the Blame Game is given precedence over that which it is supposed to be securing: love. Love and friendship, romantic love, friends and lovers are pushed aside in the name of the Blame Game, supposedly being used in the service of that love, that friendship.

Unfortunately the Blame Game is not a game. The Blame Game is legal, even required, social warfare. You are required to blame; you are a fool if you do not. Your friends will supply you with the information you require to blame and you will be a fool if you do not use it. We are all seeking the safety, warmth and comfort we knew in the womb. This is a deep impulse in us all. When this satisfaction is not found in the nature of awareness itself it will be sought wherever possible. A seeking that proceeds without any clear, conscious sense of what is being sought.

What everyone is seeking is unconditional love, unconditional safety, unconditional acceptance. This is not a special state, place or relationship. It is not something that we can find, manufacture, negotiate or achieve. It is not to be found in orgies, mantras, drugs, caves, raves or temples. It is in effect nothing other than freedom from the Blame Game. In order for this freedom to become possible we must be able to hear the Blame Game speak. Learning to hear the Blame Game speak is necessary for understanding the conditioned nature of all action. For recognising the illusory nature of volition. For recognising the impersonal nature of all phenomena. For realising the selflessness of our true nature.

It requires that as your life unfolds you quickly hear the Blame Game speaking. You learn to recognise the subtleties of its articulation which you wrap around yourself in the cold darkness of the night as if it were comforting to be able to blame another. To be able to attribute another motivation, impulses, strategies that are your own invention. But the Blame Game is so universal, so ubiquitous

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that it is comforting to be back within its straightjacket again. To not be able to move your arm means that at least you don't have to and that can be comforting. To pass the responsibility for your own imagining, your own interpretations, your own projections onto others which you are required by society to do.

Some of us here have a friend who became involved with a vicious and violent man. Her friends were constantly telling her what to do with her love for this man. The pressure put upon this woman by her friends, by her family, by society to accede to the rules of the Blame Game, which she resisted as best she could, led her friends and family to abandon her, subtle though that abandonment may have been. Those who were seeking to protect her abandoned her deeply. They deeply abandoned in the pursuit of the Blame Game. He has done this to you and therefore he should be punished. He should be removed from your love, he should be removed from your attention, he should be removed from your energy. And so they removed themselves from her love without even realising it, without being able to acknowledge it. Nevertheless it was felt by her.

The social life of human beings is almost entirely the Blame Game running amuck in every direction. As soon as a moment of real openness, real honesty, real exchange, real love arises, it is stamped on by the Blame Game. "I'd better not just in case I get into trouble." I'd better not do this natural, spontaneous act in case the Blame Game catches up with me. The Blame Game has already caught you up. Obviously the Blame Game being as deep, as all pervasive, as deeply institutionalised as it is in the fabric of society is not easy to escape from. Yet if it is not surrendered there can be no escape from suffering.

This certainly requires courage in the face of the knives that the Blame Game thrusts at the skin of your throat. Courage to test their illusory nature and walk forward into that apparent sharpness to find that it is nothing at all. To find that there is no substance, no truth behind the Blame Game whatsoever.

What truth and the substance it has, is only what you give it in the moment out of fear or habit. You can be free, you can be what you want to be, only if you give up the Blame Game totally. You can express yourself honestly and openly without fear even if what you offer is rejected. You can accept that rejection without fear if you

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have surrendered the Blame Game. Nothing could be more valuable to the living of your life than this surrender, the surrender of the Blame Game. Headstand, handstand, kevala kumbaka, nirbija samadhi, sabija samadhi are as nothing compared to being able to live without the Blame Game.

The tragic irony is that the culture of yoga is a master of the Blame Game. Thou shalt not eat meat, thou shalt not exploit animals, thou shalt not enjoy pleasure, thou shalt not have attachments, thou shalt not have prejudices, preferences, likes and dislikes. Thou shalt not, in effect, be alive. But you are alive and as long as you are alive you actually have the possibility of being free from the Blame Game. But only if you hear it speaking so seductively in your head each time that it does. This is not actually a difficult thing to do, if we are willing to forgo external authority and turn the light of our awareness within. Then we just need to allow that light to shine its rays of sensitivity, honesty, openness, generosity upon that which is actually happening.

The Blame Game is what is happening most of the time. All the times that you find yourself isolated in your own mind, not giving the love that your heart is dying to give, you are probably in the grip of the Blame Game. Then you embrace hostility instead of love. You endorse fear instead of generosity. You express duplicity instead of honesty. Your hands grasps where it could be giving. Just in case a fantasy might come true, a reality, the depths of your being are put aside, sacrificed. Yet this is not a problem that needs to be fixed. There is no magical or mystical formula that can get you to a better place.

It's simply a question of being honest, open, sensitive and generous enough just to see that' the Blame Game is what it is that's driving you. Then it will stop. Because when you see what it is, then you see what it's doing. What it's doing is creating enmity, it's creating hostility, it's creating warfare, its' creating pain, it's creating suffering. As soon as you see this you stop. That doesn't mean that two seconds later it doesn't just jump back out of habit. But that doesn't matter. That stopping is conditioning you to stop more easily the next time. That moment of stopping is nirvana. That mind no longer being the mind of the Blame Game, in that moment.

People build their whole lives on the Blame Game, their whole life. What they do, why they've done it. Nothing but the Blame Game.

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We're addicted to it, addicted to the Blame Game. Sugar is benevolent in comparison. Heroin is a gift in comparison to the Blame Game. Until the Blame Game has lost its roots completely you will forever be seeking to control circumstances that are beyond your control. You will be forever seeking to control others who are beyond your control. You will be forever judging and alienating yourself from others who were born of life as gifts to you and all who participate in life.

What happens when instead of looking for something, you just look at whatever is to be seen? What happens when you look, without looking for? Love is what happens: as you relax into what is, love is what flowers. Because when you look you see and if you're seeing clearly, then you're seeing God, you're seeing truth. If you're not, then the odds are you're being played by the Blame Game. It can be subtle, there can be no sense of blame anywhere, there can be no sense of hostility anywhere and the Blame Game can be playing. Any attempt to secure anything is actually the Blame Game. Any attempt to control anything is actually the Blame Game. It's the Blame Game, it's not close to, it's not similar to, it is the Blame Game.

The Blame Game is more subtle and universal than you think. Trying to become a better person is the Blame Game. This is not the same as trying to overcome illness, or fear. These are specific, organic reactions to difficulty and pain. Trying to become a better person is an abstract, insensitive response to the subtleties of disappointment or guilt. Guilt and disappointment being simply the left-over expression of the Blame Game. Sitting down and seeking silence is the Blame Game. Subtle perhaps, but it is the Blame Game. Life is not good enough as it is. I'm gonna make it better. I'm gonna put it right. It's wrong as it is. Genuine meditation is what happens when the mind comes to rest naturally. When it is no longer troubled by any ambition, any disappointment, any intention, any seeking.

The Blame Game rules because we are ignorant of the true nature of action and volition. Whether we see volition as true, real, actual or not, actions are indisputably happening all the time. We are involved in doing all the time. So we need to become clear about the possibilities of action and choice. The fact that we have no real freedom of choice doesn't mean that we don't choose. We do choose. Recognising the true nature of action and choice doesn't mean that

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we shouldn't choose. We must choose. It therefore doesn't mean that we shouldn't prefer. It doesn't mean we that we should not evaluate. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't differentiate on the basis of our likes and dislikes.

In fact it means that we must do that. We must evaluate on the basis of what we like and dislike: what we would like, what we would not like. We must utilise preference in order to make choices, and choices do often need to be made in order for actions to be taken. If the impersonal nature of phenomena is not seen deeply enough it can create confusion and you can think, "Well if I have no volition because all actions are impersonal, I shouldn't pursue or seek what I prefer". This is to overlook that the preference is also impersonal, the seeking is also impersonal. It's all impersonal. It's all conditioned. It's all perfect.

All of our decisions and their results, all the repetitive actions that we take are guided by the pain pleasure mechanism. They are guided by the need of every cell in the body to thrive. For which it needs first to survive. Because of this need for survival, and its extended need for expression, growth, integrity etc, we are always faced with choices and decisions. Choices that permit us to proceed towards a deeper wholeness according to our own judgement. For the collective impulse to cellular survival imposes an imperative of wholeness on the organism that we are. A wholeness that is secured only by distinguishing between danger and safety, between pain and pleasure. By using the compass of like and dislike, attraction and aversion: navigating by our preferences.

Life is always seeking to express itself more fully. Cells, tissues, organs and organisms always seek comfort and stability. This is inherent and requires no learning, no accomplishment to establish. It merely needs to be given the space to function. A space that clear seeing automatically creates. Clear seeing is the fundamental agent of positive, wholesome transformation. An agency that is implicit in the very nature of sentient, conscious life. Because of the innate and irrepressible impulse towards wholeness that is the very dynamic of life itself clear seeing, or awareness, can change our behaviour, by changing our conditioning by changing our understanding.

In other words we can influence the flow of life. But this does not mean that we can control it. It simply means that our feelings, thoughts, decisions, choices and evaluations participate in the flow

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of our life. If you like to say that they actually determine it you must look a little more closely if you are not to end up caught in the Blame Game. For they themselves are totally conditioned or determined by a matrix of forces and factors completely beyond our control. So our feelings, thoughts, evaluations, choices, decisions shape our lives on the basis of the unseen forces and factors determining them. This means that through the agency of choice and decision making our behaviour, our conditioning, our lives can change. But it also means that other forces and factors not only limit the effectiveness of our choices, but even actually determine them.

We are each the star of the movie of our life. Whatever we do, think or feel influences our life much more than any other single element of our life. If we see clearly, deeply into the conditioned nature of all phenomena and the illusory nature of volition we don't fall into the trap of thinking we can't seek what we want. We can, we will, we do enquire into the possibility of experiencing what we would like. The clear seeing into the conditioned nature of all phenomena reveals we're not in control of our lives. Yet at the same time it reveals that we are the primary instrument of our life. We've recognised that our instrumentality involves decision making. Decision making requires the operation of preferences for survival. Our well-being requires that we experience pleasure rather than pain. If we see this clearly we do not abandon making choices. We do not deny the need to make decisions. We do not abandon preference and attachment. Nor do we claim the decisions and choices that we do make as our own. Nor do we claim the attachments and preferences that determine them.

We see, accept, acknowledge and express our instrumentality without subscribing to the Claim Frame. By not subscribing to the Claim Frame we do not get taken by the winds of the Blame Game. We make our decisions and choices lightly, without demanding our preferred outcome. We make them as enquiries, rather than as demands or commands to life, others or ourselves. We make them knowing that we are not the choice maker, the decision maker. Knowing that we are not the chooser: but that we are the agent of decisions made by the unseen. Knowing that we are not the decider: but that we are the instrument of choices made in the unseen. Knowing without any doubt at all that we are not the doer.

The cortex makes human beings deeply inquisitive. To be human is to be constantly enquiring into the possibility of improvement, of

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growth. This is a fundamental function of the cortex. This natural function of the cortex can allow the Blame Game to be weakened. As its destructiveness is recognised it is undermined. As soon as you realise that you are harming yourself you will enquire into the possibility of not doing so anymore. Eventually this enquiry will bear fruit. Of course you can't expect that this enquiry will bear fruit as quickly as you might like. You can't expect to be in control of the process that you are the agent of. But you are the agent of this process that is embedded organically on a cellular level. A process that becomes conscious in the cortex and that is supported by the thrust of life in its indivisible and irresistible totality.

As you recognise that the Blame Game is damaging your circumstances then it's only too natural for the cortex to direct its inquisitiveness to the possibility of relieving you from that destructiveness, from that damage. In other words, you don't need to feel impotent and helpless in the face of the conditioned nature of all phenomena. Because the whole universe is backing you up and it's backing you up towards wholeness, towards integrity. All you need to do is let it happen and the letting it happen means just see how you're interfering with it so that the interfering with it can be relinquished.

Freedom from the Blame Game is therefore based on an enquiry into the possibility of recognising the Blame Game. Recognising how the Blame Game manifests in your own behaviour, in your own speech, in your own thinking. Then it might become possible for you to realise when you are inviting the Blame Game. In that realisation you might be able to let go of that, knowing, from experience, where it leads to.

Once the tyrannical destructiveness of the Blame Game has been recognised it begins to weaken. Especially when it is clearly seen that it creates not only so much suffering, but unnecessary suffering. This weakening continues to the extent that we become sensitive to its expressions. To being able to hear the subtle, insidious and consistent voice of the Blame Game. This weakening represents a transformation in our conditioning. As our conditioning changes, our behaviour changes. We blame less, we condemn less, we judge less. As this happens we become more sensitive to the arising of blame and its offspring. Within this open and honest sensitivity we drop it like a burning coal, and it becomes more and more easily replaced by acceptance and love.

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When we see the Blame Game playing, when we hear the Blame Game speaking the whole foolish tragedy of blame, guilt, resentment, manipulation fades away and genuine love can finally flower. Not negotiable, conventional, social contract love. Not emotional manipulation, not behavioural modification in the name of love but true love, unconditional love. The love that you are. This is not something that you need to learn. You already got it. You are it.

