

Being: the bottom line

being:

the bottom line

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In the year following publication of *Already Awake*, the focus of the talks began to shift to the theme of 'Being'. The present book is a selection from transcripts of live dialogues that emerged in the autumn of 2005.

Introduction

The bottom line is Being. Being awake or being asleep are actually beside the point.

Usually the idea is that dialogues such as these have the specific purpose of bringing about enlightenment, awakening, liberation—whatever the term used for that which is deemed to be escape from (or transcendence of) identification as a suffering individual. But our true nature is always Being and doesn't require any enlightenment or awakening. It simply *is* already, whether there's identification or not.

In the play of life, whenever there is identification, the story tends to be about improving *what is* in some way. And when that takes the form of the search for awakening, the focus usually falls on getting rid of the sense of individuality, as though it were somehow wrong or unreal.

But if there's a sense of individuality and a story about seeking to be rid of it, then precisely *that* is reality. Being has no requirements whatsoever. Nothing needs to be changed or attained in order to *be*. This present appearance is already the perfect expression of Being and cannot be avoided.

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A Description

Oneness, or Being, although indivisible, could be said to have two aspects: awareness, and the presently appearing content of awareness.

The content of awareness is all of the various images that appear: visual images, sensations, sounds, thoughts, feelings, etc. All these images appear presently in awareness, but the thought images appear to offer an added dimension, the capacity for seeming distraction away from or out of presence into the story of 'me' as an individual, a distinct entity located in time and space.

This story of 'me' is based in thought, and as thought is only part of the whole picture, when the story appears as reality there's an accompanying sense of lack. Seeking for wholeness is the story of the attempt to fill this sense of lack.

The search for wholeness arises in myriad ways, one of which is the search for enlightenment. Here too it is inevitably focused within the personal story, the partial, psychological view of reality, and consequently it cannot result in a lasting sense of fulfilment.

Whenever the play of life is not seen from the psychological viewpoint—from the point of view of 'my' story—there is a non-personalised, unfragmented picture free of any sense of lack.

Everything is likely to appear just as it did before, but without the distorted view that makes it 'mine'.

So what can be done to disengage attention from the personal story?

Nothing can be done, because there isn't actually any entity present that could do anything. The personal story is what gives the impression of a someone that's doing things, making choices, taking decisions, etc, whereas in actuality this someone, or 'me', is simply a commentary arising along with whatever else is appearing.

In the absence of the commentary, or where the commentary is seen as such, it's quite obvious that everything is happening or appearing entirely of its own accord. No one is doing anything.

But who sees it as a commentary?

All of the images are appearing, or being registered, in awareness. There's no one, no entity, to see it. All of this is simply happening in Being. The commentary has the effect of personalising the awareness aspect of Being, giving the *impression* of a someone where in fact there's no one.

This can be very frustrating, to hear that there's nothing to be done when there's still a sense of a someone that can do something.

Yes, whenever there's identification as a someone, there will be a corresponding feeling of agitation or frustration, the need to fill the sense of lack. Maybe seeking to fill that sense of lack takes the form of performing various practices such as enquiry or meditation, or maybe

simply hearing a description about all of this is enough for seeking to be seen in its true light.

At those times when there's an understanding of that, there comes a real feeling of relief.

Understanding can certainly give rise to a profound sense of relief. But understanding (in the sense that I use the word) is still something integral to the story of 'me'.

But can't understanding also lead outside of the story, to enlightenment?

If the story is seen as a story then no understanding or anything else is needed to 'lead outside' of it.

So seeing through the story, or the disappearance of the story—is that enlightenment then?

'Enlightenment' only appears significant from the viewpoint of 'me'. Only the story of 'me' requires enlightenment. Your true nature is Being, and Being is already all that is (even when there is seeming ignorance of that) with no requirements whatsoever.

So even apparent ignorance of Your true nature is still the expression of Your true nature?

All ignorance and all stories about overcoming ignorance are the perfect expression of Being. It's impossible to avoid Being. How hard is it to *be*? It's always the case, regardless of what appears.

Various teachers prescribe methods and techniques that seem to produce results.

Yes, and just as often they *don't* produce results. It's an interesting story, isn't it?

So it all just happens as it happens? The teacher prescribing a technique, and the student practising the technique, and some result happening or not—that couldn't be otherwise?

Exactly so. Everything is happening entirely of its own accord because there actually isn't anyone to make anything happen. 'I' is part of what's happening, not the cause of any of it.

Everything may be happening of its own accord, and yet it often seems as though there's a 'me' making plans, taking decisions, doing things.

It's the commentary in thought that seemingly divides what appears into something being done by someone.

But there's nothing wrong with that; it's not something that's got to go so that something else called enlightenment can take over. If there's identification, then that's what's happening, that's what appears as reality. If that identification is seen through, then *that's* what's happening. Being is already the case, whatever the configuration of appearances.

A sudden total dropping of identification of any kind could also happen of course.

Yes, that could happen mid-story.

But the identification could return?

Maybe, but any coming and going is merely the play of life. As far as Your nature as Being is concerned, the absence or presence of a personal self is inconsequential. Being simply *is*, and all of these appearances and happenings may simply be described as the cosmic entertainment. In actuality, nothing has ever happened.

Try to not *be*!

I wonder what you see as the purpose of this talk?

I don't see any purpose. A room is appearing with people in it. A conversation is happening, which appears to be in the form of a description. Maybe in the case of some of the characters some kind of relaxing happens in hearing this description, maybe not. It doesn't actually matter because the whole thing is simply happening in Being, *is* Being. Purpose or meaning appears within the story of individuality, and if that's what's happening, then that's fine as well.

So if you stop identifying, do you lose purpose?

It's not that 'you' stop identifying, but it's possible that the sense of identification that *is* 'you' disappears, and it may then be seen that no purpose is required to *be*. While the story of individuality is happening, purpose will usually seem significant; there's a sense of a 'me' going somewhere. That's the play of life.

The idea that there's no time never makes any sense to me.

Time is mesmerisation with the story in thought such that it appears significant, whereupon thoughts of past or future—which are actually only presently appearing ideas—are taken to be real. The only reality 'past' and 'future' have is in fact as ideas.

But the past did happen.

Nothing happened, though a thought may arise that says things happened.

I've still got the taste of biscuit and coffee in my mouth from half an hour ago.

That taste in the mouth is appearing presently, and along with the taste in the mouth arises a commentary that says, 'This taste is from half an hour ago'. There is no half-hour ago—there's only presence, and in presence there's a thought that includes the idea of half an hour ago. It's only thought that substantiates the idea of an individual 'me' extending through time.

So you're saying the taste is arising in presence with a story that's arising in presence, from nowhere—no causality?

Whenever there's identification with the story in thought, there appears to be time and cause and effect. Without identification, all is seen to be arising spontaneously, causelessly.

But it's not that either of these positions is 'right'. It's all Being, and no particular view is 'right' or 'wrong'. Where the search for enlightenment is promoted, however, it's suggested that the identified view is illusory. The description being given here is not biased in favour of an 'enlightened' view. I'm not trying to persuade you that you didn't eat a biscuit half an hour ago, but it's possible that that could be seen as a story rather than as a fact. Either way is reality.

Nothing needs to be ‘got’ or understood here. Life is just a play of images arising presently.

I can see that, but it’s just that this ‘I’ seems so real. I can’t seem to let go of it.

If it’s what’s appearing, then it *is* reality, it is real. No need to let go of it.

I’ve got no choice anyway.

No. Maybe identification will drop, maybe not. It’s all Being. Being has no preference. If there was a preference, though, we’d have to say it’s for confusion—because there’s a lot more of that about than there is clarity!

(laughter)

Is Being an entity?

When it seems as though ‘I’ am an entity, then Being may also be presumed to be an entity of some kind, as some *thing* that can be acquired or attained. When there isn’t identification as ‘I’, then there are no entities to be found anywhere.

So Being doesn’t need an entity to experience itself?

Being is already the case, whatever is appearing.

So you can’t not be?

Try to not *be*!

Sometimes I do! (laughter)

Simply this

So Nathan, very briefly—what’s understanding, what’s knowing, what’s the difference between the two?

Understanding—in the way I use the term—is limited to thought; it appears as though there’s someone trying to work it all out.

With knowing, thoughts still arise but they appear objectively in the same sense that a tree, a sound or a sensation appears. The story that their content conveys is not taken to be ‘my’ life, what ‘I’ am. Everything is simply as it is, with nothing needing to be worked out.

What’s the difference between them? Understanding seems personal; knowing is impersonal. The difference is relative, though. Either way there’s actually no one, there’s simply *this*.

Thought

The nature of thought is such that it suggests other dimensions, other possible realities apart from *this*. If identification is the present reality and there is also present the *idea* of something called enlightenment, enlightenment in that example is illusory. It has no reality other than *as* an idea, as a thought. In that sense thought appears as the gateway out of presence, out of reality.

Isn't thought itself reality, though?

Thought may be appearing presently as part of reality, but when thought takes centre-stage in the play of life, its content suggests that there are endless alternatives to what presently *is*. It lends a seeming reality to the idea of past and future—what has happened, what might happen.

When thought is not viewed in that way, then there is simply this: everything as it presently appears. Which also includes thought.

Assumptions

The general theory is that rays of light come in through our eyes and form images in our heads, in our brains. But you're saying this is an unnecessarily complicated way of describing things. Is that correct?

Based on present evidence alone, on actuality, where is the brain that's supposedly inside this head? Are there any brains presently appearing in awareness?

There may be a book on the shelf that tells a story about there being brains inside these heads, where chemical reactions are happening and thoughts are being produced, but actually, right now, how many brains are there appearing in the room? *(laughter)* So presently, the brain story is based entirely on assumption.

But isn't this a limited view? It seems to me that you're saying that the brain and the story are less real than that which is presently perceived. Maybe a world without conceptual thought would be the reality for a tiny baby, but that's not reality for me. My reality includes all my stories, my experiences, my thoughts and all the rest of it. But I hear you say that all those thoughts, stories, etc, are less important and less real than the actual.

Whatever appears presently as reality *is* reality. I'm not suggesting any version of reality is more or less important than any other. What I am suggesting is that whatever presently appears as reality can be seen in an

entirely different way when not based on a thought-filtered view.

But there is a brain. It's the brain that keeps on thinking these thoughts and analysing all the time, moving us from place to place, running our lives and producing all these stories.

But does it? Is there really a brain that's thinking thoughts? Based on present evidence alone, thoughts are just appearing here in awareness. That there is a brain thinking thoughts is itself just another thought that arises as a story in awareness.

If you'd never heard all of these stories about brains being responsible for thoughts, then thoughts would simply be appearing mysteriously in awareness, with no brains to be seen anywhere. In fact, that's actually the case right now; that's what I'm pointing out. Going on present evidence, the brain as an instrument for producing thoughts inside these heads is just an assumption.

It's not that this assumption is 'wrong'. But the brain example serves to reveal how easily overlooked is the obvious fact that thought—and everything else—is simply appearing presently in awareness. Instead, when life is viewed through a filter of thoughts, of unexamined assumptions, endless stories explaining how and why everything appears are taken as reality.

When all of these assumptions *aren't* being taken as reality, when these thoughts are seen as thoughts, then everything still appears in awareness. Thoughts still arise, but their content doesn't have the effect of fractionating and dividing. In this case the stream of thought is merely an interesting story.

Let's say we've got a switch here which can instantly turn off the sound volume of the thoughts so that there's no longer a commentary running, no longer any stories appearing. Without that commentary there's simply what presently appears in awareness—which still includes thoughts, although they're now inaudible. With the *content* of thought no longer available, whatever presently appears is viewed directly, rather than in the fractionated way in which the thought story presents it.

I'm not saying that thoughts have to disappear from the picture, but that if their content isn't viewed in a serious light, then life appears as more of an entertainment than an ordeal.

But if you drop all of the assumptions, everything disappears.

Does it? You're a step ahead of me then. *(laughter)*
There are no assumptions arising here right now, and yet everything still appears.

But you're actually speaking from the position of a baby. This is how a baby sees things, without all these assumptions. But to have faith in not investing in the stories that appear requires us to let go of everything that we are, everything that we seem to be.

I'm not suggesting that you have faith in anything—merely that it's possible for this life to happen without assumptions. It's the assumptions that require faith!

So is this why it's said that when the thought story isn't taken

as reality and there's no past, no history, everything seems new and fresh in each moment? That's what the difference between you and me is. I'm seeing it as samey and boring but you're seeing it as ever fresh.

For as many characters as there are in the room there are that many versions of reality, and no one version of it is more significant than any other. So if what presently appears is the same old table and a rather unremarkable standard lamp, then that's what is. That's reality.

But if you're enlightened you don't mind.

There you go with the assumptions again! *(laughter)*