

The Ever-present Nature of Ourselves

We were brought up with the belief that we are a separate entity that was born, evolves, grows old and eventually dies, and that belief is not easily shaken. Our three previous papers were designed to help us question the assumptions that lie behind this belief. We have questioned the materiality of the body and the world, we have seen that time is an invention of the mind, and we have begun to recognise that the apparent feelings of density and solidity in the body are nothing more than a superimposition by the mind. Having addressed these issues, we now look directly at the belief that we are finite and temporary, and destined to die. As Rupert explains, it is this belief that is at the core of the feeling that we are a separate entity that needs to be defended and protected:

The way we think, feel, act, perceive and relate has been conditioned for decades by the fundamental presumption of our world culture that our essential identity of Awareness is a temporary, finite entity that lives in and shares the limits and destiny of the body. This apparent mixture of Awareness and the limitations of the body gives rise to the belief and, more importantly, the feeling of being a temporary, finite entity or self. Being temporary, the apparently separate self or ego fears death or disappearance; being finite, it feels incomplete, and thus suffers from a chronic sense that something is missing.

These two feelings – the fear of death and the sense of lack – are the two elements that define the apparently separate self around whom most people's lives revolve, and on whose behalf our fears, desires, insecurities, neuroses and anxieties arise. The separate self is not an entity; it is an activity – the activity of thinking, feeling, acting, perceiving and relating on behalf of an imaginary, temporary, finite consciousness. That activity has been rehearsed for decades, and it does not come to an end with the recognition of our true nature. The source of that activity comes to an end, but its effects in the way we feel, act, perceive and relate continue. In other words, the feeling of separation in the body outlives enlightenment, in the same way that picking a flower cuts it off from its source of nourishment in the earth but doesn't bring it to an immediate end.

[*Transparent Body, Luminous World*. Introduction]

As discussed in the earlier paper, *20170427 Exploring the Body from the Inside*, the yoga meditations are designed to help the feeling of separation that is enshrined in the body to dissolve. But first its 'source of nourishment' needs to be removed. In other words, we need to be thorough in our enquiry into our true nature to make sure that we understand in our own experience the eternal and unlimited nature of ourselves, and do not have any lingering doubts or uncertainties. It's not enough to read about this and to see that what we read sounds plausible, or to adopt it as a belief. We need to make the discovery for ourselves and understand its implications. That means raising and exploring any doubts and objections that seem to block our full understanding.

The deeply-held belief that we are born and will inevitably die is a common sticking-point. We have been brought up to believe that this is the case. We think to ourselves: 'Surely the awareness that we know ourselves to be cannot really be eternal? Doesn't it die when the body dies? And if not, what actually happens when the body dies?' Here are Rupert's answers:

Q: What happens to awareness when we die?

RS: The body is an image in the finite mind, and the finite mind is a localisation of infinite Consciousness. When I say 'the mind', I mean 'mind' in the broadest sense of the word. The body is a mixture of images, sensations and perceptions which appear in the mind. All you know of your body now is your image of it and your sensation of it. It appears in your mind. So the body is an image in the mind, but the mind itself is a contraction, or a localisation, of Consciousness. The

nature of Consciousness is infinite. Now it's not possible for infinite Consciousness to know a finite object. Because imagine infinite Consciousness as like an infinite space, and now imagine a little finite object appearing in that space. That finite object would displace a little bit of Consciousness's infiniteness, and therefore, Consciousness would no longer be infinite – it would be finite. So it's not possible for infinite Consciousness to know a finite object. In order to know a finite object, infinite Consciousness must seem to cease being infinite and become finite. Infinite Consciousness must become the finite mind.

It's only as a finite mind that Consciousness can know the world. That is why in deep sleep, we don't know the world, because Consciousness has totally de-focused, it has let go of all its association with the mind and the body, it's gone back to itself, and it is infinite Consciousness knowing its own being alone. In order to know something other than its own being, Consciousness must, as it were, cease looking at itself, cease knowing itself as it is, and become a finite mind. Now how does it become a finite mind? It simultaneously creates and identifies itself with a form. It is this mixture of Consciousness plus form, or Consciousness plus the body, that creates the finite mind. It is only as that finite mind that we can know a world. That is why even when we have a dream, the dreamed world is always seen from the point of view of a dreamed person. If you are walking down the streets of London, the streets of London appear to you in your dream, *you* are one of the people on the street, and the street that you see is seen from the point of view of the person. So in order for a dreamed world to appear in Consciousness, Consciousness has to appear to locate itself as the dreamed person. It's only from the point of view of the dreamed person that Consciousness sees the dreamed world.

Likewise, now, it's only from the point of view of the body that Consciousness is seeing a room. Consciousness has to seem to limit itself as a form, as a separate subject, in order to know a separate object. But in order to know itself, it doesn't need to identify itself with a body. It knows itself, by itself. ... Indeed, once Consciousness takes the form of the finite mind, it cannot know itself as it is. Because just as the infinite Consciousness cannot know a finite object, so a finite mind cannot know infinite Consciousness. If Consciousness wants to know the world, it has to focus, it has to narrow its vision, it has to assume the position of the body. And it is only as that body-based Consciousness that it can know the world. But in order to know itself it has to gradually relax the focus of its attention, let all those limitations drop away until there is nothing limiting itself. ... That is Consciousness knowing itself without the agency of a finite mind.

Q: So is that the same as what happens after the body dies?

RS: Yes. Remember the body is an appearance in the mind. So when the body dies, a particular localisation of Consciousness disperses. Your finite mind is a localisation of Consciousness. When the localisation dissolves, Consciousness doesn't dissolve. As a friend of mine, Bernardo Kastrup, put it: 'the finite mind is like a whirlpool in a stream. All there is to the whirlpool is water. When the body dies, the whirlpool dissolves. But nothing disappears, because all there is to the whirlpool is water.' The water remains, but it no longer precipitates in the form of the body/mind. So the mind is like a precipitation or like a whirlpool. It's a localisation of Consciousness and the body and the world appear in that localisation. When the body disappears, that localisation disperses. However, as the localisation disperses, its contents are still in Consciousness. So there's no reason why another localisation shouldn't form that contained the elements of the previously dispersed whirlpool. For instance, this could explain 'successive lives'. They are not 'successive lives' they are successive precipitations of finite minds and there's no reason why the residue of one finite mind as it disperses into the stream shouldn't take the form of another whirlpool, or another finite mind. So this could explain what is normally

considered to be the theory of reincarnation – a theory of reincarnation that has nothing to do with physical bodies being born and dying. No – physical bodies never come into existence, we never go further down than Consciousness and mind. We never go down to ‘matter’. Everything we know of matter – that is the body and the world – is an appearance in the mind, in the *finite* mind.

Consciousness precipitates as the finite mind and appears as the body and the world. And then when it relaxes, it ceases to be finite mind and the body and the mind disappear. And as it focuses again, the body and the mind come into existence. And this successive contraction and relaxation happens on different timescales. It happens every time a perception comes to an end – there is this momentary contraction and relaxation. It happens every 24 hours when we fall asleep. It happens on a bigger scale when we die and when we’re born. They are just different life-spans, different timescales for this same process of Consciousness localising and relaxing, localising and relaxing. As it localises, the body and the world come into existence, as it relaxes, it goes out of existence.

[Dorset retreat, 2nd December 2014: [What happens to Awareness after death](#)]

That is an explanation of the theory. But for that to become our felt experience, we need to spend time abiding as awareness, so that little by little we come to experience and feel the qualities of the awareness that is our true nature – its inherent peace and imperturbability, its infinite and eternal nature and its independence from any presumed objects of mind, body or world. The only way to discover this is by being this knowingly, by standing as awareness. Because only awareness can know awareness. That understanding is surely the best preparation for death of the physical body. Here is part of Rupert’s discussion with an 85-year old at Buckland Hall about the process of growing old and dying:

At the deepest level our minds are One ... in other words our essential being is not limited to each of our bodies. There is only one being. ... In the religious traditions, God’s being is the only being there is. [The fact that you understand this] means that as your body and your mind begin to fall away, you can let them fall away. You can let your mind fall away without any fear at all, because nothing is happening to God’s presence in your heart, the self that you are. Everything extraneous to it is just falling away. And in fact one of the beautiful things about growing old – if we grow old with dignity – is that our essential being shines more brightly. And you see this in some elderly people that as their minds and their bodies begin to fall apart, their essential being comes out from hiding and it shines more and more brightly. Some very old people just shine with this beautiful, luminous, peace. I’m sure everybody knows people who have grown old and died in this way. So if you know that, if you know that God’s being is your being, it’s never diminished or aged or tarnished by experience, then as your body and your mind slowly disintegrate, your being just shines more and more brightly. And that’s the most beautiful gift that you leave for your friends and your family. That’s your parting gift to them.

[19th November 2016: *Seeing the ‘I’ of Awareness in its Purity*]

Contemplation

I, open, empty Awareness, am aware of thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions but am not made of any of these. All these come, go, move and change, whilst I remain as I am, without birth, death, movement or change – eternal and infinite. [Rupert Spira]