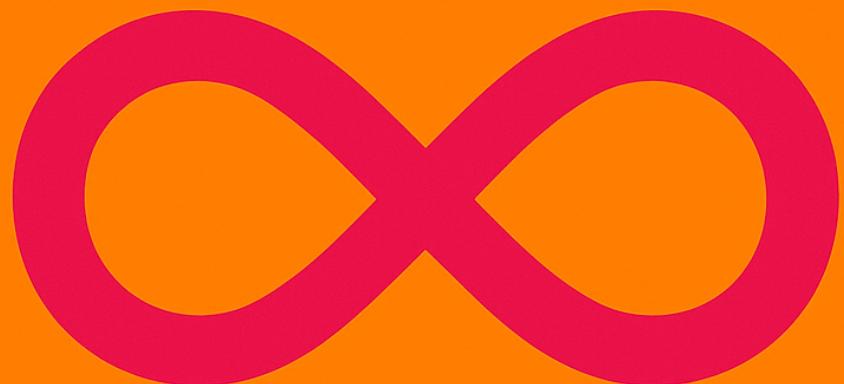


TRANS DUALITY 101

We Are This



Odd Ness

TRANSDUALITY 101

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Better Not to Begin

Turn me back into the pet, I was when we met

I was happier then, with no mindset

—The Shins

Who are you?

Who am I? Or to you, of course vastly more important: Who are you? This simple question has dwelled at the heart of human truth seeking since time immemorial.

What would be *your* response? If you probe deep enough while posing this question to any number of people, you are likely to receive a range of answers as varied as the number of people asked. However, all the answers will probably share a common denominator. Nearly all of us see ourselves as some kind of entity living within the wider scope of this moment. How we choose to describe that entity will differ wildly. Some will say that they are their body, while others may claim to be some kind of spiritual being. The vast majority of us however believe ourselves to ultimately exist as some kind of entity existing in this moment.

The purpose of this book is to propose an altogether different and much simpler solution to the who-am-I conundrum. For a good many years I took a long, hard look at this reality that we live in, trying to decipher its nature. What made my seeking so frustrating, was what makes every seeker's journey frustrating, and it can

be found right there in the middle of the previous sentence. More specifically in the words: “this reality that we live in”. This basic assumption is so deeply ingrained in all of us, and it cost me blood, sweat and tears to move beyond it. The answer I was looking for was found in the realization that ultimately you and I are neither material nor spiritual entities existing *in* this moment at all. Rather, our true identity lies as this moment and not *in* it.

In or *as*? The difference between these two wordlings may seem insignificant, and yet I believe it holds the very key to realizing the nature of reality.

If you already upgraded your self-identity from *in* the moment to *as* the moment after reading these short opening paragraphs—great! Please feel free to throw this book in the river, or better yet, pass it on to someone who might benefit from reading it. To the vast majority of us however, this message is so different from what we’ve grown used to hearing that some further explanation will come in handy. So let’s go back to the start, shall we: Who am I? Who are you?

It’s not as if we haven’t tried. Throughout the history of human beings religion, philosophy, biology, and physics are but a few of the nets we have tossed out in order to catch the elusive “I”—to solve the mystery of Self. But every time we think we’ve got it, it slips from out of our hands. Let’s perform an experiment of self-inquiry and simply ask ourselves: “Who am I?” to highlight this end-of-the-rainbow nature possessed by the self. You can find variations on this technique all over the playing field, from ancient scriptures and all the way up to contemporary texts on psychology, philosophy, or spirituality.

As a small boy I created my own version of this self-inquiry. “What in me,” my young self pondered, “would be the same if I grew up in Indonesia instead of my

native Norway?" Why Indonesia? Probably because it was a country I knew nothing about except its location on the most faraway part of my bedside globe. I never found the answer to that question. Not until some twenty years later when I realized the nature of reality, a realization I wish to share with you in this book.

The first time my grown-up self was confronted with self-inquiry in a more formal spiritual context was on attending a meeting held in South Africa. A friend of my then girlfriend was into an Indian guru and had recently been appointed assistant teacher at meetings where the guru's teachings were presented. She had now invited us to drop by one of these meetings, so off we went. One of the practices taught in the class was self-inquiry. Pairs of attendees were instructed to ask each other: "Who are you?" Upon receiving an answer the instruction was to simply repeat the question, probing deeper into the layers of self-identity.

The core of this guru's teachings was proclaimed to be nothing less than unconditional love. I was soon to discover though—that there were indeed some conditions in place, as halfway through class I was asked to leave. The head teacher accused me of letting my love interest for my girlfriend get in the way of focusing sufficiently on the teaching. Like a castigated schoolboy I found myself standing outside the temple, contemplating exactly what it could mean to get thrown out of a class on unconditional love. Before I could find an answer to that particular question, my girlfriend appeared at the exit door wearing a wry, naughty smile on her face. I put a flower in her hair, and we proceeded to make passionate love up against the temple wall. Maybe that was the best of answers to self-inquiry?

But here I go, letting my focusing disabilities get the best of me again. Let's get back to business and ask ourselves this simple question: "Who am I?" We'll begin by

passing somewhat swiftly through a few of the more basic answers to our query, moving onwards to more subtle variations, before arriving at what I think constitutes the final answer to it. Because yes, contrary to many other self-proclaimed realizers I wholeheartedly believe there actually is a meaningful answer to be found.

“Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going?” These are the three most perennial of perennial questions. First in line is: “Who are we?” and rightly so. After all, if we possess no answer to this firstborn of the perennials, surely the latter ones fall flatly to the ground. Where we’re from and where we’re headed remains rather irrelevant if we have no clue as to who is doing the coming and going. And yet, hardly anyone has provided a satisfying answer to this essential quiz-opener—at least not while sober or south of midnight. Instead we have equipped ourselves with an impressive array of cunning tactics when the first of the perennials rears its head in our direction. Preferably we dodge the question altogether and rather divert our attention towards more pressing issues, such as: “So, do you think the price of gas/housing/beer will go up this year?”

If playing dodge ball doesn’t work, we may muse something like: “Ah, the eternal questions,” before glancing thoughtfully upwards at the firmament or outwards across the ocean, producing a Mona Lisa-smirk while shaking our head, before moving on to those more acute mysteries of human existence: “Yes, I believe they will. Unless they go down, that is.”

But what if we decide to skip all these our rituals of avoidance, and rather continue down the rabbit hole of self-inquiry: Who am I? Who am I, really? Let’s sample some of the cruder responses to our probe. We could start off by doing a bit of Captain Obvious. “I am Odd,” or whatever name your own parents decided to

curse you with. My name actually is Odd. If that wasn't enough, when I tell English speakers that my family name is Ness hilarity is certain to ensue. In my native Norwegian Odd doesn't have the same meaning as it does in English, but in our time of globalization it is of course a rapidly dying name, one dead Odd at a time. But yes, my name is indeed Odd Ness.

The oddness of names aside, let's move on to what will often constitute the next line of defence when confronted with the self-inquiry: Who am I? That defence may run along the lines of: "I am this body."

As we run out of the more obvious answers, we may turn our attention to traits we consider to be unique or important to our personalities. "I am strict, but just," proposes a Republican. "I, on the other hand," objects a Democrat to his left, "am just, but strict." An old-school hippie raises his hand, and in a soft voice offers that we all actually are our feelings. Three science students pass orderly by. "I am the electromagnetic field between the cerebral hemispheres," proclaims the first. The second indicates that his self actually equals the chemical congregation in the brain's neurotransmitters. "You and I baby are nothing but mammals!" barks the third.

"We are... our thoughts," a thoughtful person utters thoughtfully. A systems thinker points and explains that we are all pieces in a bigger puzzle. An elderly man exiting a house of worship swears on being God's creation. A young woman slides by, as if two inches above the ground. "I am a Light being, and I become one with reality when I meditate," is her mantra. The time has come to take a closer look at these different answers to our survey, as from dark alleyways a choir of faceless, angry voices is gaining momentum: "I am who I am, damn it—you hear me!"

“I am my physical body.” This is the most common of self-identities. But when exactly is it that we are our body? Or, more to the point, when were we ever limited into *only* being our body? Can you remember a single moment of your existence when you were only your body? Hasn’t there always been something else present in your experience beyond the body? Isn’t there something else present in this very moment? Can you imagine a future moment when your body will be the only thing present? Neither can I. And besides, at what side of the equation does the “body-only-self” leave the air that we breathe in and out of the body? At what point does the air become part of our selves? On entering the nose, or maybe on filling our lungs? Perhaps on providing our bloodstream with all that vital oxygen? Without which even the neurotransmitters are rendered useless. It may not be for nothing that it is called *spirituality*. The word stems from the Latin *spiritus*, which means breath.

What about our feelings—was our emotional friend onto something? Sure he was. The structure of language also provides weight to this assumption. “I am sad,” we say, or, “I am glad.” But our words are not our reality. Granted, we are our feelings in the same way that we are our bodies, but neither of them represents the final say on who or what we really are. An eye cannot see itself directly, and our feelings cannot see our feelings. Something in us “sees” our feelings, and this *something* is what we are looking for.

How about the thinker? Without probing too deeply into whether the think tank reckons we are *all* of our thoughts—the petty, the nasty and the downright self-denigrating masochist ones included—or if we only are our nice and noble thoughts, we’re going to let this theory slide as well. On second thought we realize that even thoughts fall object-prey to the subject we’re seeking. Again, who is it that sees our thoughts? Have you by the way ever tried directing your full attention towards your

thoughts by thinking to yourself: “Welcome all thoughts, please enter!” and then mindfully wait for your guests to arrive. Try it out, and you will find that not a single thought shows up for the party. Nothing but cancellations as far as the inner eye can see. It’s one of the best meditations for stillness of mind there is.

God! Finally someone who can create some order from all of this chaos. But, if our vision of God follows the classical plot along the lines of heavenly Grandpa—then who created God? And if we attempt a more metaphysical approach, saying God is spirit or God is love or something to that tune: Where does God end and we begin? Do we begin at the outer- or the innermost layer of skin, or maybe at the dermis in between the two? Does God end at the heart valves, or is the final frontier to be drawn at the brainstem?

Was the systems guy pointing us in the right direction? Are we all nothing but bits and pieces in a larger super-object—Gaia for example? In the same vein as the rest, this suggestion holds a lot of truth to it, because we are that too. However, even this suggestion fails to provide the final answer to our question, which was: “Who am I?” To claim we’re all separate pieces in the mother of all jigsaws only clutches one unsolved piece of the self-identity puzzle together with a host of other equally unsolved entities. If we don’t understand letters, the way forward lies not in creating sentences.

So—should we all just get down and enter the position of the half- or full-lotus? Is the end of our rainbow to be found in a meditation induced and grunge-free nirvana? Still no. Whatever it is that we are, we are it all the time. Our true nature isn’t accessible only through one particular state of mind. The nature of reality is open 24/7. Years of meditating will not create a particular state in which we can claim

to be closer to, or further from, the nature of reality. It may help us attain a blissful or in other ways admirable state, but our purpose wasn't to attain a state, but rather to realize the nature of all states. Meditation may indeed be a wonderful tool on the path to that final realization, but ultimately the nature of reality is fully present now, now, and always now. It doesn't depend on the states we happen to find ourselves in. Whatever is created and maintained through effort—a state of mind induced by meditation for example—will be lost.

Umbrellas are lost. The happiness found in the haze of a drunken hour is lost. But the nature of reality is not. Nor does it hide. Not in the quietude of the world, nor in the mind. Stillness of world and mind are both beautiful manifestations of the nature of reality. But equally so is the primal scream of big city nights. We humans may feel the need for some stillness, but the nature of reality is beyond such distinctions as silence and noise, order and chaos.

Wrapping up, none of the above answers to our question have delivered the goods. “Who am I?” is still as much of a mystery as it was at the start of our inquiry, if not even more so. Somewhere along this path towards the essence of who we really are, a question slowly creeps to the fore: “What in me is it that sees all these things?” There is something in you and me—a subject in us—that objectifies our body, objectifies our thoughts. The cheeky fellow is even rude enough to objectify our innermost private, secret feelings.

Two things are becoming ever more self-evident. Firstly, it seems we will never be able to “catch” this subject, whatever it is. It will forever escape our attempts to define it, no matter how cunning we may be. All definitions we as seekers may come up with will automatically be rendered object-prey, soon to be devoured by this

super-subject. Simply by asking who or what is seeing our newfound answer, that very answer is objectified, and as far as ultimate answers to the first of the perennial questions go, objectified means nullified.

Secondly, it's starting to dawn on us that the identity of this subject isn't confined to be just me, or what we've grown used to calling *me*—in my case, Odd. To this insatiable peeping Tom, Odd seems to be just another dish on the menu. Granted, Odd is to me an object unlike all the other objects—a personal, subjective object if you will—but he is still an object. So who is this seer of Odd? Who or what in you is the seer of your own relative self? Show me this voyeur and I'll tell it to mind its own business! Or is that maybe exactly what it is already doing?

The Voyeur

So who is this mysterious seer? What exactly is this shadowlike super-subject that cannot be caught, but which itself appears to effortlessly digest everything our cunning can muster on our pursuit of the very essence of our being. *Maybe, just maybe*, we may start to think: *This witness of all things is actually who I really am?* Is this the answer we've been looking for? Have we finally realized the Self—the nature of reality?

This is a broadly held assumption amongst advanced seekers. This new vantage point with all its new perspectives certainly seems refreshing. I am not this, not that. I am the witness of all passing phenomena. As the glass walls of the previous self-identities start to splinter all around us, we may feel freer than ever.

Maybe even enlightened? This is as far as most of the really interesting teachings will take the spiritual seeker. But, and this is a major but, it is far from far enough.

This level of self-identity has many names, depending on the tradition in which one travels. Having arrived at this point of self-identity, we are the observer of all that occurs, an observer that we intellectually begin to assert as our new self-identity. Many call it the Witness. Personally, I prefer to call it the Voyeur. The Voyeur is initially an enticing self-identity, because we now get to peek into nooks and crannies of reality that were previously hidden from us.

Everyone agrees that the self-identity of humans evolves. They may disagree on how many levels we go through, or what constitutes a level or is merely a stage or a sub-stage and a million other things, but everyone agrees that self-identity is not a constant entity. All these different levels of self-identity seem boundless once we first enter them. Established in a new self-identity the self finds that it may initially move freely in all directions, be it upwards or downwards—left or right. As long as the roaming is constrained within the boundaries of the new level, only our imagination sets the limits.

This initially creates a delicious illusion of freedom, and the level I call the Voyeur is no exception. I remember when I first entered this particular brand of self-identity. It was wonderful. I abided as the witness of all things arising in the moment. If you practice enough awareness meditation, the Voyeur will stay with you throughout the day, into your dreams and even into dreamless sleep! When this happened in my own life I felt like a spiritual champion, because I'd heard how this was a spiritual achievement. Surely this had to be enlightenment?

However, it is merely a question of time before we encounter the limits to even the Voyeur level of self-identity. The previous levels of self may have been upgraded, but in reality it has merely been traded in for a new variation on a familiar theme, that of a partial self-identity. The Voyeur may be subtlest of the dualistic daggers hidden in the heart of the wholeness called reality, but it is, alas, still partial to the core.

Soon enough the Voyeur is no longer infatuated with its new perspectives. A thousand pieces may have been reduced into two, but in some ways we now find ourselves *more* shut off from the rest of reality than before, not less. Previously we would on occasions experience moments of oneness with other objects present in our moment. These are often the exact experiences that lead us onto the seeking path to begin with. Such feelings of oneness may overwhelm us on a dance floor on a Saturday night, or in a house of worship on a Sunday morning. But now, resting as the Voyeur, we are stuck with our new self-identity locked into a state of constant self-conscious separation. The Voyeur glares out from one side of a window, while the rest of reality is firmly placed on the other side of the separating glass wall. It's all very much a dualistic self-identity indeed.

The problem with the witnessing level of self-identity that I refer to as the Voyeur is the same as with all other levels, namely that they are exactly that, levels. Merely parts of a whole, the very whole that we are seeking. Before identifying as the Voyeur we experienced the world as alien and infinitely fragmented, because we had identified as only one out of the countless objects present in our moment, namely the relative self. But even now, identifying as the Voyeur, we remain a stranger—an alien. This wasn't what we wanted at all. Otherworldly and passive we witness the passing reality out there. Heaven forbid this be our final destination. We didn't upgrade our self-identity in order to have it traded in for this ghost in the machine. We

therefore leave the Voyeur in its seat, free to watch all of the marvelous and tedious proceedings parading outside the separating glass wall.

The Voyeur is as far as many books on spirituality will take us. We started out looking for those Big City Nights of realizing our true Self, who we really are. We bought our tickets. We opened up to those perennial questions we used to ignore. We sat down in our seats, roaring to go. Applying one of the wisdom traditions or a cocktail of many of them we are led in the direction of truth. But every time we think we're approaching a final answer... nothing. We're left to hang. High and dry. In this book I promise to not leave anyone hanging. Some will nod approvingly of the answer it provides. Others will prefer horizontal headshakes, but none shall be left hanging.

The Voyeur is only Halfway Town. So we may take this opportunity to get off for a minute in order to stretch our legs a little. The spiritual journey is long and winding, and there are many times during a seeker's life when we will agree wholeheartedly with the first part of a saying by Chögyam Trungpa, a Tibetan spiritual master: "Better not to begin," it says. But now we need to wave the Voyeur goodbye and get back in our seat in order to go all the way. That saying by Trungpa has a second part, and that is the title of our next chapter: "Once begun—better to finish."

Once Begun – Better to Finish

We are not humans having a spiritual experience.

We are spirit having a human experience.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Allow me to introduce my Self

Up until now we have spent most of our time talking about what we are *not*. In order to go all the way towards realizing the nature of reality, the time has come to see if we can instead confirm what it is that we actually *are*. In order to locate whatever is hiding there in the retreating shadows, we will now focus our attention on the present moment.

Just to make it clear from the get-go: It matters not at all how this present moment of yours pans out. Whether you're feeling drowsy or stoked, dull or amped, is of no significance whatsoever to this little experiment of ours. No lighting of exotic incense or soundtracks of chanting dolphins running subtly in the background is required. All is equally good. It's easy to feel a little Zen-like when sitting on a mountaintop gazing at the sunset, but if what we're looking for is genuinely interesting, the specific content of your moment matters not in the slightest. You may be overflowing with bodily hypersensitivity induced from an amazing session of yoga,

or you may feel knackered from working a graveyard shift. Both are fine. It is this moment of yours in its entirety we're interested in, regardless of its content.

Your present moment will include what you're used to calling *me*. Your moment will also include all your present thoughts and feelings: great and small—filthy or noble. Your heart will be at work, beating away. The neurotransmitters are doing their job, all within this moment of yours.

There are more features present in this moment. This book is present, and if you're sitting inside, there is a room present. Maybe a lamp is hanging over your head, or a photo of a loved one on the wall? A wall you at one time may have risked your personal finances or your relationship in order to have it decorated in the exact right shade of burnt orange. But now, in this moment, the wall presents itself effortlessly to you.

Are you situated outdoors? Can you hear the roar of passing traffic? Maybe a cloud of exhaust has inserted its foot at the door sills of your nostrils, insisting to proceed its way down into your airways? What's important is to acknowledge how all of this is happening spontaneously, automatically, just as your heart keeps on beating without any conscious, valiant efforts on your part. You don't have to *do* anything for any of these things to play themselves out in your moment. The reality, rather, is that they continue to unfold regardless of your willed effort or lack thereof.

Right here and right now in this moment of yours, she or he that you call *me*, is sitting, standing or lying. And the world weighs heavily on your shoulders. You've been sleeping for a long time, imagining yourself to be lost in your own dream. The time has come to wake up...

The answer to the question: *Who am I?* is actually as uncomplicated as the question itself. I am, and again, to you much more importantly, *you are*—none other than... this moment! That which sees this and all other moments, and the entire content of this and all other moments, is one and the same, and it is who you really are. This is the essence of what I call Transduality.

Thank heavens a version of relative self isn't the final destination on the path to who we are. When I use the expression *relative self* now and throughout the rest of the book, I refer to all the various versions of self-identity that think themselves fundamentally separate from the rest of this moment. The relative self is a central and amazing part to who we are—to who you are—but it's still just a part of the wholeness that is *you*. You are all of it, all of this, not only a small part of it in the shape of a relative self. In other words, you are not merely a guest in your own life (don't forget to snatch the soap before checking out).

You are of course the old relative self *too*, but there's no need to identify exclusively as only *one* of all the objects present in your moment. Your relative self—fill in with appropriate name, my own would be Odd—is a relative object in your absolute subject, this moment, which is your infinite Self.

The time is now

Your absolute Self is infinite because this moment has no boundaries. Not in space and not in time, nor in any other dimension. The eternal moment, which is *this* moment, keeps its word and is exactly that: eternal. Have you ever noticed how this

moment never ends? We have of course trained ourselves into thinking that each moment is replaced by the next moment. In order to navigate our relative self through this eternal moment we have wisely chosen to divide it into lots of separate mini-moments: nanoseconds, minutes, years, millennia. It's easy to forget we're actually only ever dealing with one indivisible and never-ending moment—this one.

This is what is sometimes referred to as nowness, and why it is said that nowness is the only reality. Every shred of the past exists solely in nowness, and all future too. The memory of the wine you consumed last night exists only now. Beyond that lingering hangover throbbing in your head it can no longer intoxicate you. The thought of tomorrow's planned feast also occurs right now, and is presently incapable of filling your stomach. As you drank the wine it happened now, and when you shall sit down at the table tomorrow evening, ready to dig in, that too will happen right now. Memories of the past and expectations of what the future may bring, happen now and only now. Nothing but nowness wherever we look. A nowness that is the same as this timeless moment that was never born and will never die, and which is who you are. It is unborn and undying because it doesn't spring into being from an outside. It only ever is.

One of the darkest clouds forever casting its ominous shadow over the relative self-identity is death. Deep down, a relative self knows there is but one and one only final destination to its journey. Soon enough every intelligent self will draw the logical conclusions predetermined by its dualistic perception of self and reality. Life from a relative self's point of view is ultimately a sexually transmittable disease with a hundred percent mortality rate. A tad on the dramatic side of things perhaps, but still, in the greater cosmic scope of things the human existence is an undeniably rather ephemeral affair.

Ephemeral and lonely. Stuck in a relative self-identity we understand that genuine understanding between two separate selves is an illusion, and that no matter how many other selves we interact with, we shall remain forever alone. As long as we believe ourselves to be ultimately separate entities any genuine flow beyond fleeting encounters, not to mention a little thing called unconditional love, between two such vessels is inconceivable. As relative self-identities we also realize that everything we do is ultimately meaningless. *We* are meaningless. Nothing more than biological landfill on a random passage through an endless and foreign cosmos of space and time.

Sure, we'll put some make-up on to cover up this stiff in waiting—after all, nihilism followed to its logical conclusion isn't a pretty face to greet the world with. But underneath the superficial make-up: The empty, glaring skull that is the true face of all versions of a relative self. As the years roll by the roaring noise from the waiting waterfall that is our own death grows forever more deafening. The best we can hope for is to close our eyes, insert our heads firmly into the sand, and succumb to our destiny.

Paralyzed by an imagined foreign and threatening reality out there, we are blinded to the fact that we ourselves are the sole creators and upholders of the lines of separation and the destiny to which these boundaries chain us. This idea of absolute separation and death is by design our own innovation. Every slap this destiny lands in our face is by our own accord. But what if this destiny isn't our final destiny at all? This is the hope that is carried in the hearts of those souls that embark on the spiritual path: A suspicion that there might just be another destiny available. And thankfully, there is. There exists a destiny that adheres to, and doesn't oppose the nature of reality. A destiny that won't chase us forever closer towards the

devourer called death, while constantly reminding us how it is taking care of us, how it only wants what is best for us, and not least, how it is the only destiny available.

When we first embark upon the path of conscious seeking, it is often accompanied by a feeling that this is the beginning of the end. The spiritual path is littered with talk about the death of ego and what not. A relative self-identity is indeed a part that is limited in time, so it falls very naturally for us to relate the end of seeking to such scenarios. And a transdual upgrade does indeed imply end credits to life as we have hitherto known it: A never-ending soap opera on the relationship between the relative self and the rest of the content arising in the moment. This particular show is thankfully axed from the programming schedule once we wave the tyrant rule of relative self-identity goodbye. However, in relation to our absolute Self, the doomsday blockbuster scenarios couldn't be further from the truth. To identify as this moment and not merely *in* it, is the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end.

Eternal life isn't what the pre-upgraded self imagines it to be, namely that particular relative identity's existence strewn across an infinitely long line of separate moments. As we have seen, both premises to that line of logic are false. Both the absolutely separate self and the absolute separate moments it imagines its existence stretched across, are concepts that melt away under the light that radiates from insight into the infinite transdual nature of reality. The eternal moment seems divided only when we relate it to the worldview based upon a relative self-identity.

This may induce a certain whiff of disappointment in someone who imagines eternal life to be a welcome change of environment for the limited self. Farewell to the dirty and sinful Earth, and hello to a clean and hassle-free post-mortem VIP

lounge. No, eternal life is yours right now, as soon as you admit that you exist as this moment and not merely *in* it. Actually, eternal life is already yours and mine, regardless of how our relative self-identity may imagine eternal life to pan out. Whether I identify as the moment or if I persist to insist this relative self is all I am doesn't really matter. The relative self will die, but the moment that embraces the self-identity who insists the relative self is all it is, will not. Nothing lasts forever, and you are that no-thing.

The re-enchantment of the world

This moment has no limits in time, and the same goes for space. This moment of yours—which is who you are—neither ends at the perimeter of your body, nor at the wall in front of you. It doesn't stop at the border of your country, or at the horizon, or at the end of the universe. This moment isn't constricted by time or space, because time and space are manifestations of, and play themselves out within this moment. Not the other way around. Time and space are things we invent once we have identified ourselves as subjects separate from an outside made up from equally separate objects. Time and space is the distance that separates us from this infinity of objects, and the distance in between them.

In the intimate immediacy of the moment, before we have imposed our separating filters upon the transdual nature of reality, whether that would be the space between you and me or the time between your birth and death, none of these qualities exist. Their nature is relative. Remember, that *everything is relative* doesn't

mean that everything is random or meaningless. It only implies that in order to establish an object or event's true nature we have to investigate its relations.

Even though concepts such as time and space are relative, that of course doesn't mean that it's a bad idea to operate with such hugely helpful structures. But we shouldn't mistake what is truly the nature of reality with that which is not. We merely need to distinguish between maps that are designed by relative self-identities in order to navigate these identities through the infinite terrain of the nature of reality, and this terrain in itself, prior to and regardless of such inventions.

The only thing that sustains the belief in a self somehow fundamentally separate from the rest of this infinite moment is the thought: *I am a fundamentally separate self.* That thought however has no evidence whatsoever to back it up. If we look at reality as it presents itself now, now and always now, there is nothing to support the notion of such a self existing independently of its circumstances—the rest of this moment. The only solution to this contradiction is to shift self-identity to the moment in its entirety, of which the relative self is a welcome and essential, but never for a moment fundamentally separate part.

Established in this upgraded transdual self-identity we stand free to embrace the outside world, all of it, knowing for certain that reality is but *one* movement and not two or ten thousand. We embrace all of it, because the nature of reality, this moment in its entirety, our absolute Self—is all the objects. As we have tried to establish: Outside of the subject of this moment, which equals the nature of reality—no objects exist. In other words, borrowed from one of the most central Buddhist teachings, the Heart sutra: *All form is emptiness.* *Emptiness* is a word that may chime a little odd in English, but the word simply points to the fact that no objects

ultimately possess separate existence. They are all facets of this eternal, infinite moment.

However, and this is essential in order to nudge the last remnants of duality out of the seeker: We also notice how nothing exists outside the objects! The second part of that quote I mentioned from the Heart sutra is often overlooked or misunderstood, and it goes like this: *Emptiness is also not other than form.*

There is no object-free zone outside or beyond the objects for a subject, be it God, the Voyeur or any other part of the wholeness that is this infinite moment, to hide in. As soon as such entities appear they are simultaneously integral parts of this moment. The transdual nature of reality is stitched together in such a fashion that without an object in which to reflect itself, the subject doesn't exist as anything but potentiality—a potential that is only realized through the manifestation as an object. In that very act of manifestation, the subject is indistinguishable from the object through which it manifests. Without the moon to reflect its rays, the sun of this moment never arises. Subject and object are dependent arising entities. We cannot have one without the other. In other words: Emptiness is also not other than form.

This is essential, because the conditioning in us to dream up some entity outside of this moment, which created or orchestrates the proceedings of this moment, is so very deep. Even if we come to accept that all form is emptiness—that no objects possess independent existence—we are still prone to imagine some entity *outside* of this moment that *does*—whether a God or a programmer of the cosmological matrix. Transduality contends that no such option is on the table. To the extent that there is a force willing this moment into being, that force is itself indistinguishable from this very same moment, which is what and who we really are.

The insight that the nature of reality is indistinguishable from the objects through which it manifests has many wonderful ramifications. One of them is that it signifies the re-enchantment of the world. The Austrian sociologist and philosopher Max Weber borrowed the term “disenchantment of the world” from Friedrich Schiller. Weber used it to describe the transition from a worldview signified by belief in magic and religion, towards the modern worldview where all phenomena was rationalized—and thereby disenchanted—by logic and science. The familiarization of our circumstances led to the alienation that defines modern life.

Transduality offers the best of two worlds. We don't need to discard the blessings bestowed upon us by modern rational science and logic. On the contrary we now stand free to utilize the beautiful potential of such wonderful tools even more fully. However that science and logic no longer disenchants the world, as we realize that all the objects are perfectly enchanting, natural—inevitable even—manifestations of a reality that is more magical than anything our relative self-identities could ever dream of.

From this realization grows the joy of no longer being pre-programmed into viewing reality as a potential threat to our cut off relative self. Neither must we anymore regard the world as beautiful and purposeful only to the degree that it can be utilized to fulfil our needs, or when we may use its beauty to reflect back upon us. No more is there a need to let fear and desire define our relationship to reality in all its forms. Instead of such a utilitarian approach to reality fuelled by our fears and desires, we realize that *it is we and we are it*. The whole drama, all the sadness and all the ecstasy—every single thing arises as manifestations of your true Self.

Feel free to relax, take a deep breath, and be completely at peace in this infinite and eternal moment that is your true Self. Put your legs up and feel at home, because that's where you are. Not that you ever left. There is literally nowhere to go. No need for claustrophobia to creep in, though. On the contrary this new self-identity is the vastest, most expansive feeling you'll ever experience. After all, claustrophobia warrants the threat of an outside to a self on the inside. One of the many very welcome side effects of identifying as the infinite moment is that there is no *other*. Nothing outside of you, threatening your existence. There is only an infinite, infinitely rich and endlessly dynamic you.

If you're serious about seeking the absolute Self, the buck stops here. Whatever arises in this moment is immediately part of it—part of you. Upgraded to your true Self—admitting who you really are—you may return to or take up such wonderful tools as the scientific method, meditation, seeking out ecstatic experiences, or any other technique in order to get to know your Self a little better. So, you go on, applying the beautiful scientific method as a wonderful tool to learn more about this moment that you are. You seek out tantric secrets to be who you are, ecstatically. You meditate to listen silently while your absolute Self whisperingly unveils its secrets. But the search for that absolute Self—is over.

Your relative self is worthy of a loving embrace too. The relative self prospers and goes on even after this final upgrade of self-identity. It merely loses its exclusive rights to self-identity. And in that loss it finally wins itself. To take on a transdual self-identity means that you transcend yet *include* the relative self. It is not a recipe for borderline disease where the limit between self and other becomes blurred. To the contrary, you will know clearer than ever the limits between the relative self and the rest of the moment.

While fighting the nature of reality, trying to control it, the relative self was the one that suffered the most. Unchained from that mission impossible, the relative self is now free to excel as one of the many hearts in the body of your true Self. Even though the heart discovers that it isn't the end-all, but rather a central part to an amazing whole, there is no reason for the heart to stop beating. On the contrary, it will beat harder, happier and more beautifully than ever. Knowing that it too exists as this eternal and infinite moment—not merely *in* it.

The Voyeur and the Ecstasy

Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything.

Between the two, my life flows.

—Nisargadatta Maharaj

Masculine vs. feminine

In the opening chapters, I touched upon the self-identity I called the Voyeur. This self-identity bears witness to all that arises, and it often tries to impose itself as the absolute Self. This witnessing Voyeur is the pinnacle of what is called masculine spirituality. It's a beautiful state, but it does not represent the full nature of reality. However, the conflating of this state with enlightenment permeates so much of modern day spirituality that it is worth taking a moment to throw a hidden glance in the direction of this Voyeur.

Masculine spirituality is a form of seeking that longs to rid the seeker of all the constraints that come with human existence. It's an impulse that reaches out for the sun. It longs for a heavenly paradise or an exit from the karmic wheel of life, in order to be rested in nirvana. In short, masculine spirituality seeks to detach itself from all worldly phenomena in order to escape this dirty and sinful prison called Earth.

Feminine spirituality is the exact opposite. It isn't about seeing, but about being. Detached witnessing doesn't turn it on—being seen, truly seen, more easily

triggers arousal. The feminine principle is all about the expression of life itself and it avidly attaches itself to nature, colors, shapes and scents. It doesn't dream of the sun. Instead it immerses itself in the reflected light of the full moon, dancing naked under its caressing beams. It doesn't long to probe the universe, but rather prefers to scrabble in the earth with its fingers, listening intently while the soil whispers what herbs it wishes to grow. The feminine principle is a hyper-sensual, Earth embracing, passionate spirituality.

While the masculine principle passes through paths such as meditation and introspection, the feminine route is devoted to the senses, to devotion, the trance of dance and dreams of unconditional love. And it reaches its own climax not in detached voyeurism, but rather in ecstasy. Interestingly enough the word ecstasy comes from the Greek word *ekstasis*, which means *to be or to stand outside oneself*. That's a goal the masculine principle can relate to. So, in the end the masculine and the feminine spiritual principles apply different paths to reach their common goal of transcending the relative self.

The meeting of these two paths is manifested in the tantric sexual union where the man and the woman remain present throughout their lovemaking and its climax. The Voyeur and the Ecstasy becomes one. Although an extended fully present orgasmic bliss admittedly sounds like one of the best ways to experience this reality, it cannot be said to *be* the nature of reality. Even if that bliss may well seem like an eternity, a tantric climax comes to an end, and the nature of reality knows not beginning nor end.

This organizing of reality into feminine and masculine principles is not exclusive to Tantra—it is found in all of the major religions, wisdom traditions and all

the way into the mainstream of society. In the Eastern system of yin and yang, yin represents the feminine principle, while yang is the masculine. In Western psychology we find it all over the popular personality tests like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Enneagram in dichotomies such as *extrovert* and *introvert* when applied to certain features of our personalities.

In his book *Immortality* the Czech-French writer Milan Kundera offers a beautiful description of these two different approaches. In a chapter titled *Addition and subtraction* he introduces us to two sisters, Agnes and Laura. While Agnes wanders towards self-knowledge via the masculine path, a path that sees how all form is emptiness, Laura chooses the feminine route that sees how all emptiness is not other than form:

Agnes subtracts from herself everything that is exterior and borrowed, in order to come closer to her sheer essence (even with the risk that zero lurks at the bottom of the subtraction). Laura's method is precisely the opposite: In order to make her self more visible, perceptible, seizable, sizable, she keeps adding to it more and more attributes and she attempts to identify herself with them (with the risk that the essence of self may be buried by the additional attributes).

Jealousy and moon rockets

The main problem with the masculine principle is that it likes to see itself as the only spiritual game in town. A Brazilian village and a moon rocket can help illustrate these

patronizing tendencies of the masculine principle and its problematic relationship with the feminine.

For several hundred years the masculine principle was on a hot streak. That streak culminated in 1969, the year when the world held its collective breath as Apollo 11 attempted to conquer the moon. In Brazil, a socially conscious journalist named Mário Lúcio Franklin decided to cover this spectacle while embedded in a small rural village called Carrapateira. The village is situated in *Nordeste*, the poor northeastern part of Brazil, and had gained a dubious claim to national fame after a survey showed it to be the most materially miserable of all counties in the country. Franklin intended to contrast the amount of resources spent on Apollo 11's voyage to the moon, with the lack of resources still felt in communities such as Carrapateira down here on planet Earth.

The ensuing newspaper report in *Jornal do Brasil* turned into a media sensation. Not because it raised a tidal wave of social awareness to the inequalities of the world, but due to a discovery that caught Franklin by surprise. This discovery was reflected in the title of the piece he wrote: "Carrapateira is jealous of Apollo 11!" It wasn't the resources spent on the voyage that made the Carrapateiran blood simmer. Nor was the green-eyed monster stirred by the fact that, unlike other nearby villages, Carrapateira at the time had yet to be connected to the electric grid, and its inhabitants were therefore unable to follow the moon landing on TV. So what was it that made the citizens of a rural Brazilian village feel jealous of a moon rocket?

The sun is the ultimate symbol of the masculine principle—the moon of the feminine. In the West we are used to a worldview dominated by the masculine spiritual principle. Christianity—in the way it is practised in its mainstream, non-

mystical lineages—emphasizes the masculine aspects of seeking. It is a religion of the sun, and it encourages an image of salvation as being released from the toils of this life on Earth. A distant heaven beckons, and poor Tellus is connected with sin and decay. That's very natural. After all, the Earth with all its never-ending cycles of life and death constitutes a constant reminder to the relative self of its dreaded mortality. The heaven storming masculine principle seeks eternity, and his kingdom naturally cannot be of this world with all its inherent limitations. It is more interested in fracking the last oil out of the Earth in order to fuel the spaceship that will lift him up to the sky where he belongs.

Not so in parts of the Nordeste. Their worldview is instead a conglomeration of elements gathered from the belief sets of the indigenous natives and from those introduced by the African and European newcomers. A side effect to this spiritual cocktail is that to the Carrapateirians the sun wasn't the superstar in the sky—to them that position was granted to the moon. It was to her they turned for advice on the weather and the working of the land, on life, and on love. They felt jealous of Neil Armstrong and his crewmates because they felt strongly that it was *they* who should be allowed to caress the surface of the moon. After all, it was they who loved her so passionately.

Brazilian jealousy aside, the moon landing of 1969 makes for a perfect manifestation of the masculine principle's domination of the feminine. What better archetypical image can you get than the heaven storming phallus-shaped spacecraft conquering the moon, the foremost symbol of the feminine principle, penetrating her body with their flagpole. Adding to the insult they even had the nerve to name the mission after Apollo, the male sun god! You'd think the least they could do was name it after Artemis or another of the moon goddesses.

This was the climax of a movement that had gained momentum for several centuries, at least since the epoch that both created and was created by the mechanistic laws laid down by Isaac Newton. In eternity though, no conquest lasts forever, something that can be observed in events following 1969. Many of those events carry the hallmark of the feminine principle. I'm thinking of developments such as the flourishing of alternative spirituality and (some parts of) the women's liberation movement.

Transdual Tantra

Even though you will find more men being dominated by the masculine principle and more women by the feminine, there is by no means total collaboration between the female and male sexes and the feminine and masculine spiritual principles. In the psychosexual realm this can of course be witnessed in the rainbow of sexual orientations at work in the world. The important thing to remember about the spiritual principles is that all of us carry both the masculine and the feminine principle inside of us, and we need to cultivate both.

I know I've come through sounding a little unappreciative in my take on masculine spirituality, but that's only because masculine spirituality is the more dominant and boastful of the two. And besides, although the masculine principle is a most beautiful and necessary expression of spirituality, its Earth-denying tendencies will, if not weighted by the feminine principle, quickly turn hostile towards the very miracle of life itself. However the masculine principle *does* indeed fill several

important functions. I want to share with you a story of how a misbalance in the spiritual principles played out in my own life.

Around the turn of the millennium I stumbled onto the lived experience that books like this one point towards. At that time of my life I wasn't a spiritual seeker at all. If anything I was an anti-seeker—actively steering clear of anything that reeked of religion or spirituality. I had however always been an active, semi-conscious seeker of truth, and suddenly, there I was, living truth from within. That realization was partly birthed by a beautiful friendship. Dan Lieberman was a South African, six years my senior. We shared so many visions of life and how to live it, and our friendship became a catalyst that helped both of us rid enough existential mud to live life very truthfully.

For a good few months I lived this truth. This is what is sometimes referred to as a plateau experience, as opposed to a peak experience where one catches a short glimpse of the nature of reality. Even plateau experiences come to an end though, and my own ended badly. I was in London, UK, on my way to do a vipassana retreat, when I received the news that my friend had died in a car accident in South Africa on his thirty-third birthday. There wasn't sufficient space in my world to contain this news, and shortly after I fell off the cliff of my plateau. From this side of a transdual shift I can of course say that there is nowhere to fall off *into*. In the words of Chögyam Rinpoche: "The bad news is you're falling through the air, nothing to hang on to, no parachute. The good news is there is no ground." However, before the truth behind that statement is realized that is just a heap of words.

Looking back, I can see how my plateau experience was too heavily tilted towards the feminine spiritual principle. Faced with a severe challenge the

experience collapsed, as it wasn't balanced with a sufficiently mature version of the masculine principle. It is the role of that principle to provide an understanding of ultimate truth in order to facilitate the feminine—the living of it. If we don't possess such an understanding we are prone to regress into the dualistic worldview of a relative self-identity.

Beyond balancing and providing the space in which the feminine principle may prosper and remain sustainable, the masculine principle serves at least two more purposes. The first is to offer the best possible take-off ramp to the lived experience. Even though words can only point towards the shadows where they themselves cannot go, a deep understanding of the nature of reality can give us the courage to *be*. To jump into life—living it to the fullest. If we maintain a dualistic self-identity our deep-rooted instincts will be to shy away from life in an unconscious effort to protect the relative self-identity from its potentially dangerous circumstances.

Transduality is an expression of the masculine principle that helps solve such a case of mistaken identity, allowing us to stop acting as wallflowers at what is our very own party: our life. However, Transduality is just the invitation. If our understanding remains theoretical we experience the opposite imbalance to the one I described above. In such a case we are equipped with a mature *masculine* principle but with an immature version of the *feminine*.

The other function of the masculine is to cushion the fall. The feminine spirituality unchecked by the masculine principle easily collapses into chaos and its own brand of self-destruction, just like what happened to me following the death of my soul mate. If living the ultimate truth ranks as a ten on the scale of existence, my life after I fell out was close to a zero. Having tasted what it means to really be alive,

ordinary dualistic living felt like being confined to eating breadcrumbs after having gotten used to fine dining. I felt depressed to the point where life held no meaning.

My original realization had been improvised. The upside to such an improvised approach was that the experience carried a certain sense of purity or authenticity. The downside was that once it ended my spiritual understanding wasn't sufficient to act as a safety net and catch my fall. From the vantage point of my own ground zero I knew two things: One was that I wanted to find my way back to the table of fine dining. But I also knew that this time around I would have to learn the recipe of the deliciousness at offer. To live truth without also knowing it was too perilous.

This is why I became a seeker. Several years later, I became a finder. This time the realization was twofold. There was the energetically felt experience of *being* the whole moment—the feminine principle. But there was also the understanding of what was happening—the masculine aspect—the recipe as it were. Transduality as I'm sharing it with you in this book conveys the recipe that I found at the end of my seeking. Hopefully it will help send many a fine dining your way.

I'm sure you've had your own peak or plateau experiences. Shorter or longer periods where it felt like you were in perfect sync with life itself. And then, as unexpectedly as inevitably, it ended—leaving you none the wiser. Maybe you have felt a bit like these lines off the song *From the Ritz to the Rubble* by Arctic Monkeys: *Last night/what we talked about/it made so much sense/But now the haze has ascended/it don't make no sense anymore.*

Whether falling from the Ritz of beingness to the rubble of a relative self-identity, or wishing to build on the truth of what you and a friend or a beautiful stranger talked about last night, an insightful framework offering a reminder of the

nature of reality can be very useful indeed. The fall from grace is usually less dramatic than my experience after my friend died, but it is very normal to suffer minor falls along the way. These are moments when we start to forget who we really are, and begin to take on a relative self-identity, treating reality as a concept. When that happens in my own life I find it of great help to have at least *one* insightful concept that ensure I only drop to what we may call level nine or eight instead of level one or zero, and which helps me gather myself—kicking me back into beingness.

So, the role of the masculine principle is to give us the courage to *be*. Once there, to provide the sustainable space in which the feminine life forces may flourish, and, finally, to catch us when we fall.

The Voyeur and his feminine ecstatic counterpart are both beautiful states, and even more so the temporary union of the two. But our mission in this book is not to attain a temporary state, but rather to find the nature of reality—the absolute Self—that by its very nature cannot be contained in separate or temporary states. When we hear the word *Tantra* we usually think of the sexual union between man and woman in order to reach a state of oneness. But Tantra also has many meanings that go beyond the sexual union. The main message contained in this book is tantric. It deals with the union between the relative self and the rest of the moment, the observer and the observed, the Voyeur and the Ecstasy in an existential context.

Historically Tantra has also fulfilled other functions. In ancient India and Tibet insight into the nature of reality often turned into a spectacle for the initiated. A game played out within the confines of monastery walls. The insights were dressed up in terminology that rendered them indecipherable to outsiders. With the passing of time the living truth behind these insights froze into concepts and became dead even to

the initiates themselves. Tantra is an excellent tool for bringing the secret core of the game back to life, and to catapult it beyond the monastery's walls to the people outside.

Tantra has always been a spirituality of the people, not of the priests. A contemporary Tantra should offer a language that can be understood by anyone. The nature of reality should be made available to all of its manifestations. We need simple explanations that allow for the nature of reality to be discussed and played with in the streets, at the bars, in the workplace, at home. The eternal questions are too important to be outsourced to a professional elite. People who aren't allowed to wrestle with the nature of reality are less happy people. I think this constitutes one of the main explanations as to why Westerners despite all of our material wealth aren't happier than we are. A Tantra of Transduality has a role to play in a society that senses a void where its heart was supposed to beat.

The Man in the Moon

Three things cannot be long hidden: The sun, the moon and the truth.

—Buddha

Peekaboo

Why should the nature of reality be so hard to get? The only eternal truth in an ocean of impermanence, and all the time right there in front of us. Maybe too close for us to see? As a child growing up, I often heard about the famous man in the moon. The only problem was that for the best of me I just couldn't see him. The years rolled by, but the harder I looked for it, the more it seemed to elude me. I would ask for help, and other people would point to the moon and explain: "Can't you see the nose, the eyes, the mouth?" I still couldn't see it.

It was well into adolescence before I finally spotted the man in the moon. I can't remember the exact moment, but ever since that night I've seen it clearly. At first I would oftentimes gaze at it, pondering its details while laughing to myself how for all those years I had failed to see the obvious. In this same vein anyone who has realized the transdual nature of reality will tell you it is the simplest, most natural of things. To the yearning seeker that is baffling to hear. How can it be so simple when he or she has spent years trying to get it? And yet, these people who have realized it

univocally maintain that it is so. So which is it—is the nature of reality hard to get, or is it the simplest of things?

I know exactly what an excruciating task realizing the transdual nature of reality can feel like to a seeking relative self-identity. I spent many years as a seeker, staring the nature of reality straight in the face without recognizing it. It's so hard to get, because this idea that we exist as a self in here—completely separate from a world out there—is the most natural of mistakes to make. After all, it seems so self-evident that it must be so. As obvious as looking at the sky and assuming it must be blue and that the sun must be yellow. But then again, the sky is in fact colorless. It is the interaction between the rays of the sun, certain atoms in the atmosphere, and the lenses in our eyes, make it appear blue to us. Oh, and the sun is actually white. Add to the confusion the fact that we spend our whole lives being told directly and indirectly that we are fundamentally separate, individual entities, and the imagined prison walls start to take on a pretty solid appearance.

As seekers our reigning self-identity may from the very start feel a bit uneasy with this whole business of *finding the self*. After all, he or she already *is* the self, so why go looking for what is not missing, right? Our self-identity intuits that the answer to our seeking might well remove it from its current claim to the identity throne.

To calm the relative self down it may be helpful to remind it that we have already upgraded our self-identity many times throughout our lives. You won't remember it now, but there was a time when you regarded the full content of your moment to be but an extension of your relative self. This is our self-identity when we first venture into this world. Babies love to play a game of peekaboo, hiding their head underneath a blanket. The joy is equally immense every time the blanket is

removed to expose the perfect hiding place. Boo! Not for a second does it occur to the baby that you could see it all along. Because the baby doesn't see *you*, and you have not yet been granted a distinct, independent role in its worldview.

With time it becomes painstakingly clear that the world is not an extension of our albeit ever so charming, baby self. Through physical and mental feedback we navigate ourselves towards an upgraded self-identity where we start to gain an understanding of where we end and the outside begins. The baby falls from its pedestal high chair, or it outrageously finds itself denied service at the previously open-all-hours Mummy's milk bar. Even voluble protests fail to quench the mutiny. Unconsciously we respond to the nature of reality and upgrade our self-identity.

After this first upgrade there are more to follow. If you find in your immediate vicinity one specimen of a three year old, and one paper with the picture of a sheep on one side and a pig on the other, you may conduct the following experiment: Show both sides of the paper repeatedly to the three year old. Now, put the paper between you and the infant. If you ask the infant what it is looking at, it will probably give you the right answer. Let's say that answer is: "pig". However, if you ask the infant what animal *you* are looking at, chances are it will still answer "pig"—the motif on its side of the paper. The three-year-old may have moved beyond the level of peekaboo, but it has yet to reach the next level of taking your perspective. The toddler may show true love towards you, as well as towards an array of uncles, aunts and badly designed plastic toys. It just hasn't upgraded its self-identity to allow this kind of perspective-taking yet.

If you repeat this experiment with a seven year old, she or he will give you a mock stare before telling you that you are looking at the same thing as if you looked

in a mirror: a sheep. At this age self-identity has been sufficiently upgraded to attain your perspective. The child will continue to upgrade its self-identity into wider and wider spheres of identity, until one day it may find her- or himself ready to embark on the theme of this book, which is the final of all upgrades in self-identity.

The first upgrades in self-identity have more in common with bodily reflexes. In the same way our bodies grow without conscious contributions on our side, our self-identities grows toward more encompassing versions of a relative self. But with every new upgrade the self takes on more of a conscious part in its own upgrades. No more so than with the spiritual seeker. We now actively devote ourselves to the business of upgrading our self.

Sometimes the growth from one level to the next is a painless and organic endeavour. One day the pupils of the other class of the same year at school are semi-aliens and the opposite sex are cootie-infested monsters. The next day the pupils of that same class are cooler than Frozen and brimming with hot girl- or boyfriend material.

Other times upgrading self-identity is painful. Everyone has experienced how hard it can be to perform the identity upgrades reality expects from us. One of the major shifts in self-identity occurs during our teens, and we all know what a pleasant walk in the park that transition is. We are all very tightly invested in these our self-identities. When the time comes to shed the old identity snakeskin to make room for the new, it is not surprising that we resist. A certain level of self-identity knows its role. It has rehearsed it well, and has structured its reality around it. During the first tentative steps into a new identity the self has yet to learn the moves. It is always

tempting to stick to what we already know instead of throwing ourselves into the unknown.

To upgrade the self also triggers a deeper unease in the relative self. When our self-identity is challenged we may perceive this as a threat to our very existence. Our self-identity, after all, represents who we think we are. This is why an upgrade in self-identity is sometimes referred to as a “small death.” The exclusive identification with the reigning relative self has to die before the next can take over. However, such morbid terminology is not very fitting or helpful. The self-identity is about to be upgraded—not annihilated.

Organic or painful, our earlier upgrades in self-identity are mostly unconscious events. We are pushed up and kicked out of our restricted relative self-identities; expelled by a reality that knows nothing of the restrictions we construct around the various versions of a relative self. After some resistance we give in to reality: we upgrade.

A seven year old who is able to take on the perspective of others is a more happy relative self than the one who is stuck at the level of a three year old, entering a fit of rage every time other human beings are audacious enough not to be able to read his mind. The relative self reaps benefits from and grows with every upgrade in self-identity. And yet, the relative self will always feel that such transitions are an existential threat. It’s like the friend you always have to spend forever to talk into coming to the party with you. After playing hard to get, he or she finally budges. And even when these friends have the most fun and win the party, you know you will have to repeat the ritual before the next outing.

Another curious feature to the process of upgrading the self-identity is that once it is complete, the new self-identity is often very reluctant to acknowledge its predecessor. Many seven year olds will react with a mixture of disbelief, shame and flat out denial if you tell them how their three-year-old self was unable to tell daddy was actually looking at a sheep and not a pig. Wait a few more years and show a video clip of the experiment to the offspring and his now no longer cooties-infected girlfriend from the class of semi-aliens and the foundations for patricide should be well in place. As adults we share this same tendency. None are crueler to the relative self than many of those who think they have transcended it.

Another little point is worth mentioning—if only to complicate matters further. In reality it is of course a simplification to talk about the relative self as if it was a unitary entity. The relative self is made up from many lines. We can compare it to the sound coming out of your stereo. In the sound mix there is a line for bass and another for treble. There's one line for the right speaker and another for the left. The music flowing out of your stereo is the combined result of all the different lines that create the sound.

The relative self is made up in a similar way. There are lines for everything from morality to musicality. There's a line for the right hemisphere of your brain and another for the left. All of these lines combine to create the song called the relative self. They all follow their own pace of development and may at times appear to be mutually out of tune with each other.

Hopefully the particularly catchy song called your own relative self will feel reassured from seeing that it has already upgraded itself many times, and that it benefitted from each of those upgrades.

We've seen how the self-identity isn't a constant, but rather evolves through several phases. In the first of these phases the newborn baby perceived the rest of the moment as a continuation of its still undefined relative self-identity. Isn't the transdual self-identity just a solipsistic regression to such a state? Most definitely not. While the baby's version of oneness is defined by seeing the rest of the moment as a prolonged version of its relative self, Transduality is the realization that the relative self is an integral part of the whole moment it is. It's a journey that starts in unconscious oneness, moves through conscious separation, and ends in conscious oneness. Identifying as the moment completes the cycle.

Some seekers will find it hard to grasp that they are both the relative self *and* the absolute Self. If you are among them it may be helpful to remember that this too is nothing new. Our entire lives we juggle several such double features when it comes to self-identity. You probably identify as you—vaguely referencing your body, but you also identify as something more. It could be as an American, a spiritual seeker, a feminist, a caring mother or a compassionate soul. The list is endless, but a common denominator shared by many of these added identities are that they can be very hard to attain, and even harder to maintain. You may have to learn a new lingo and a bunch of written or unwritten laws to get access to the club, and once accepted you have to live up to the various ideals of the identity you have attached yourself to.

Even lesser sub-identities can be a lot of work. If you identify as a Yankees fan, you have to know the history of the team, its proudest and saddest moment, the batting average of key players, and who hit *that* homerun to clinch the World Series in nineteenhundredandforeverago. To take on the self-identity of a sports fan—now, that's a lot of work!

When looking for our *absolute* Self the bad news is that any self-identity that falls short of *this moment in its entirety* is insufficient. The good news is that a transdual shift in self-identity—from identifying *in* the moment to *as* the moment—is but a walk in the park compared to many of its relative identity cousins. The nature of reality is not hard to get, because it is already given to you. You don’t have to *do* anything for it to be true that you exist *as* the moment. Nothing external is needed in order for you to realize it—you already have everything necessary. And once the transdual upgrade is complete the relative self is effortlessly included in your new self-identity. It’s not like those other double identities we have worked so hard to attain.

The only thing separating us from realization in this moment, right here and now, is our insistence that separation is absolute. The only thing that supports this notion that we exist as separate beings somehow trapped *in* the rest of this moment are the thoughts we construct to maintain that particular illusion. You don’t have to construct a future reality where you exist as this moment and not *in* it. That is what is already happening, regardless of whether our thoughts or words understand this to be true, claim to understand it, approve of it, or vehemently deny it. The thought: *I get this; I really do exist as this endless moment!* may appear in this moment. Or the thought: *Damn, I just don’t get it!* may appear. What will not change is this unbroken, infinite moment in which these thoughts come, stay a while, and disappear. Even if I didn’t possess a language in which to think the thought: *I exist as this moment and not in it*, the nature of reality would still be simply and naturally so.

Like a patient lover this moment keeps on giving itself, waiting for us to open our eyes, stop flirting with the up-to-no-good relative self-identity douche bags and finally see the perfect match that was waiting for us all along. This moment gives

itself incessantly and selflessly. Before we think a thought, and way before we utter a single word, it is right there—or right *here*—waiting for you and for me.

You may sense the truth in this message, but still find yourself biding your time. Sometime in the future, I'll get it. I'll just have to wait a little longer, read another book, meditate a little more, do another retreat—then I'll get it. The relative self-identity isn't ready to let go of the identity throne just yet. That's only natural. There's no rush. Be kind to yourself. After all, in absolute nowness there is but one human sin, and that sin is impatience.

What Is Enlightenment?

The spiritual measure of inspiration is the depth of the thought, and never, who said it?

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thank U, India

Am I enlightened? Are you enlightened? Is he, she, or it enlightened? If there exists but one word causing more confusion than any other in the world of spirituality, *enlightenment* is probably it. Let's see if we can clear some of the mist.

If you have spent some time pursuing your spiritual longings, you may have been faced with friends inquiring whether you have reached the goal of your seeking. “So, are you enlightened yet?” they may ask you. Or maybe you wonder to yourself whether your current state is to be considered enlightenment or not? After all, most seekers believe they are supposed to attain a level called enlightenment. At times you may indeed feel a little enlightened, while at other times less so. Every new level of self-identity feels a lot like freedom before we encounter the limitations built into it, and where we are is what we see. When we ascend to new levels of self-identity, it is therefore very tempting to think that this must be it. Maybe you don’t wonder whether you yourself are enlightened or not, but you are curious as to the status of other

individuals. It could be friends, current teachers or maybe historical figures. Is or were she or he really enlightened?

As a relatively fresh seeker I followed the spiritual trail to India. I've never been part of any lineage, sangha, or follower of any *one* particular teaching or teacher. There were many times when I dearly wished that I was part of a community of seekers, but circumstances wouldn't have it that way. However, the teaching that helped me the most as a seeker was the Tibetan school of *Dzogchen*.

Towards the end of my stay in India, I remember feeling deeply thankful for what had been an extremely rewarding and interesting time. I also made a final wish. Dzogchen operates with a set of pointing out instructions where a realized master introduces the seeker to the nature of reality. My wish was to meet a Dzogchen master in order to receive such an introduction. As my departure date was approaching, I accepted that my wish wouldn't be granted by the powers that be. That was all right, though. I had traveled to India with little to no plans, allowing my gut feelings to guide the way, but except for the Dzogchen introduction everything I could ever have hoped for and so much more had fallen perfectly into place.

On my last day before returning home I got on a bus in Northern India heading for the capital New Delhi, where I would catch my flight home. On the first stop after my own, a spiritual entourage boarded the bus. A Dzogchen master followed by two monks! I was sitting in a window seat, and one of the monks came up and asked me if it was all right for his master to sit in my seat by the window, and for me to sit next to the master, by the aisle. I had, of course, no objections. Surely, this was my chance to have my wish granted after all and receive an introduction into the nature of reality! However, as soon as the master sat down in his seat, he immediately rolled

down the window of the old-fashioned bus, and as the vehicle accelerated into motion, he stuck his head out the open window.

My thoughts immediately took off on a flight of self-recriminating frenzy: *Oh, look at him!* I thought to myself. *He is so enlightened! Taking it all in. Why didn't I do that when I sat in his seat?* In my mind I went on and on, weaving and spinning stories on how this was a manifestation of how awakening is like shattering the glass cage around oneself. It was just like the master sitting next to me. He had opened the window while I had remained within the glass confinement. After a good fifteen minutes of these schizophrenic accusations of myself by myself, the bus made another stop. The master was in a hurry to get off. I reckoned he was eager to escape the confines of his bus seat in order to bask in that perfect illusion called nature.

It was only after I had myself left the bus, that I realized why the monks had asked for my seat, why the master had put his head out the window, and why he had been in such a hurry to leave the bus. Along the side of the vehicle, starting from the master's window and all the way to the rear ran a trail of fresh vomit. The monks explained to me that their master was a chronic sufferer of terrible car-sickness.

We continued talking. They were incredibly interesting, humble and intelligent people, and they also became very interested in me when they learned of my interest in Dzogchen. They even wanted me to come with them to their monastery in New Delhi to receive an introduction. Wishes do come true! It's not for nothing the Tibetan call the mind *the wish-fulfilling jewel*. However, I declined their offer, as I had a flight to catch. Besides, their master had already unwittingly taught me the lesson I needed

to receive at the time—a teaching on not to project my ideas of enlightenment onto other relative beings.

Even if we sense the truthfulness of the message that we ultimately exist as this moment and not *in* it, a nagging feeling may soon enter our stream of thoughts, planting a seed of doubt. It will claim that although this message may very well be true, and we claim to envy those other lucky people who get to realize it, such a realization is somehow not for *us* to be capable of. Such a feat is reserved for other, more evolved souls, people like the Dzogchen master on that bus. Such projections are a common defense mechanism applied by the separate self to avoid awakening. Why would the seeking self actively avoid awakening? Because even though the relative self may claim to be seeking the absolute Self, it is only too willing to accept failure in its quest. That's because such a failure entails victory for the relative self, as it ensures the continuation of the dream of separation in which the relative self remains the top identity dog.

X=Y?

Let's take a closer look at the case of an old friend asking if you have become enlightened. Breaking it down, we've got a potentially enlightened person, namely you. Since I don't know your name yet, I will call you *NN*. Your friend now wants to know whether or not you can be said to possess something called enlightenment—a quality we will name *X*. Yes or no? It should be an easy question to answer, right? *NN* equals, or doesn't equal, *X*. This is how our thought process works. Linear. There may occur several threads of overlapping thoughts, but they have to line up, one

thought at a time. Likewise, *NN* must be located at a certain point of the enlightenment graph at any given time.

The problem is that this modus operandi, although very useful on a relative level, doesn't correspond with the absolute nature of reality. The nature of reality is everything, everywhere, simultaneously. The nature of reality is the sun slowly melting itself into oblivion; the Earth dancing around that melting sun; the tectonic plates of that Earth marching to their turtle beat; you and I trying our best to stay afloat on top of those marching plates, and everything all at once! The nature of reality is a river overflowing at the exact same time as a bride says, "Yes, I do," while the full moon gently calls the tide in, and the bride's heart screams: "No!" And all these events occur in nothing but perfect synchronicity. It is simply the nature of reality, which is your absolute Self, doing its thing.

The message in this book is that enlightenment equals identifying as the moment and not exclusively *in* it. To the extent the seeker has realized the transdual nature of reality, the claim that *NN* is or is not enlightened is rendered utterly meaningless. The words applied in your friend's inquiry: "Are you enlightened yet?" presupposes that enlightenment is a quality that can be attached to your relative self, in the same vein as one could say that you are—or are not—tall or small, wise or stupid. Yet, enlightenment isn't defined by the presence or absence of a certain quality or trait confined to a relative self at all. The question becomes nonsensical when referring to a realization that carries as its essence exactly the relative nature of the self-identity that is supposed to be or not be enlightened. If someone claims to be enlightened, you can be sure they are nothing of the kind. As the saying goes, if you see the Buddha on the road—kill him.

If you put forth claims such as those conveyed in this book, you may be faced with the other side of projected enlightenment—other people projecting enlightenment onto you. Luckily in my case any attempt at gurification will quickly fall flat. Sure, I can be wise, deep and present, but I can also be stoopid, shallow and aloof. My own life, like those of many others, oftentimes plays out like one giant mess only disrupted by the odd full-on disaster. Hopefully you will come to view me, this book and its message, as something you came up with to remind your relative self about its ultimate identity. It is but a tool to reunite your self with your Self. If you do upgrade your self-identity from *in* the moment to *as* the moment, you will realize that you, this book and he who wrote it, are all but parts of the one moment we both are.

Yesterday I lost my shit. I was already running a little thin around the edges from trying to complete the book you're currently reading, being late with another work assignment, and recovering from some minor surgery, when my washing machine broke down. I'm not at all fluent in machinery, and on all four, soaked from the water pouring out of the dysfunctional robot, I lost my calm and thumped my fist to the floor as I shouted a four letter word. Not too loud, but loud enough for my nine year old to parrot it when she herself encountered a challenge a little later in the day. Had this occurred during my time as a seeker I would have been thoroughly disappointed in myself. Surely, an enlightened being—which is what my seeker self strived to become—wouldn't go around losing his shit?

The thing is, realizing the nature of reality isn't about my relative self. Yes, the relative self benefits and grows from realizing the absolute Self, the nature of reality, and thankfully we all have our whole life to improve on our relative self. That improvement may include the ability to remain equanimous in the face of unruly washing devices, and, for that matter, the ability to fix such devices. We shall delve

further into how realizing our absolute Self benefits the relative self in part two of this book: The self in Self. But conflating the two—self-realization and realizing the Self—is the root of much confusion.

To realize the nature of reality is akin to opening a door to a new, brightly lit, more spacious and very well decorated room in the house of your life. We carry with us at least a few millennia of conditioning when we assume that an enlightened being should live exclusively in this new and shining room. But that would be the realm of self-realization, as in an attempt by a relative self to identify and exclusively live just one of the many layers of existence. It is still an attempt to identify *in* the moment—albeit a wonderful part of the moment—and not as the moment in its entirety. The pursuit of self-realization is a wonderful thing, and I myself am grateful that I have the rest of my life to pursue it, but realizing the Self is an altogether different cup of tea.

Which is why we're not too concerned whether our relative self remains within the confines of this new and wondrous room we have discovered, or whether they occasionally find themselves in lesser, more fist-thumping and four-letter-word-cursing rooms. Because this new room we have discovered also differs from the previous ones in a few vital ways. It comes with the added feature of bringing out the full beauty in all the other rooms as well, a beauty that was always there, but that we just didn't notice before. The bright light in this new room permeates throughout the whole building. Ultimately, entering this new room signifies the collapsing of the separating walls between all the rooms. Transduality allows you to roam freely throughout the house of your life while remaining acutely aware of the literally divine beauty possessed by every square inch of the property.

We want to *get* the nature of reality. To get it, as in *to understand* it, but also to get it, as in *to own* it or to *seize* it. *Seize the day* rings out as the battle cry of self-realization. You can seize the day, metaphorically at least, but you can't seize the nature of reality. You can only *be* it. Or rather, admit to yourself what is already and always happening. When it comes to realizing the Self, a sounder advice would be: *Don't seize it—release it.* Release the story your thoughts have dreamed up about the absolute walls surrounding the relative self.

True, after realizing the nature of reality a relative self will tend to gravitate towards spending more time on the newer, higher, nicer and brighter floors at its disposal and less in the fist thumping four letter-cursing basement. When you realize that you ultimately exist as this moment and not merely *in* it, that will indeed imbue your relative self. But enlightenment is never about you, me, or any of the other imperfect yet utterly perfect manifestations of this moment that all of us really are.

So, is anyone ever enlightened? What is enlightenment? There actually is a transdual answer to those questions: *Only enlightenment is—and you are that.*

Realigion

Religion is for those who are afraid of hell.

Spirituality for those who have already been there.

—Vine Deloria Jr.

A fall from grace

The word religion is taken from the Latin words *re* and *ligare*, where *ligare* means to connect. Ideally, religion is the vehicle that reconnects our relative self with our absolute Self—this moment in its infinite entirety. So how come *religion* to a lot of rational modern people—spiritual and non-spiritual alike—has become the filthiest of words? A short explanation may go something like this:

Someone establishes a line leading straight to heaven, linking the self to the Self. The line grows popular. Some of the passengers get off before they arrive at the final destination. They may be exhausted from the journey, or they may falsely believe themselves to have actually arrived. These passengers start to expand on their premature stops, and they announce to fellow travelers that their stop actually represents the end of the line. Before you know it there are local lines, regional lines, and even global lines zigzagging their winding ways all over the place, each laying

claim to be the Holy Grail. The livid traffic attracts the attention of bystanders devoid of any spiritual intentions whatsoever, people who smell an opportunity for furthering their own agendas, be it power, money, or some weird brand of crucifix fetish. The possibilities, history tells us, are endless.

Soon enough the original insight into the transdual nature of reality is torn to shreds by human ignorance and the passing of time. As a reaction to this mess we now witness countless objections to religion per se. “Religion causes all suffering,” rings the accusation. Thus it follows that all suffering will vanish if we can just get rid of that goddamn religion. The circle is complete. Something happened on the way to heaven, and the original realization that promised to save human beings from suffering is now portrayed as the very cause of it.

Considering the mess religion leaves in its trail, wouldn’t it be a good idea to just scrap this whole truth-seeking business altogether? Can’t we just agree to live and let live? Some of the sharpest people around reckon this is a good idea, seeing that humanity’s longing for the One has indeed caused the same humanity so much suffering and continues to do so.

However, I like to think of the relative self’s drive towards the absolute Self, as akin to the newborn sea turtle’s longing for the ocean. The baby turtle is born on the sandy beach, but as soon as it is hatched, it commences on a journey towards the big blue. On its path it too may endure some terrible suffering. The turtles may of course stop seeking the ocean altogether. However, that would cause them to suffer worse than ever. The rays of the sun will leave them to die a dehydrated death, and predators will have a field day in the sand. The worst consequence is this: No turtle will ever again get to flow freely through the ocean. And the ocean won’t cease to

exist, regardless of what turtles may or may not do. So in spite of the dirty stamp religion has left on the noble art of seeking, we too shall have to march on, moving towards our own ocean, the absolute Self.

Demystifying mysticism

The transdual realization tentatively conveyed in this book is by no means new. Since the dawn of humanity there have been women and men realizing the true nature of reality. They have examined their moment—which is *this* very moment—they have realized its wholeness, and they have pointed out: “Look—no separation!” Based on this most basic of observations, instructions have been designed to help others see what they saw. These realizations and the systems they have spawned make up a small part of the beast called religion.

When mining for diamonds one has to go through 250 tonnes of ore to produce a single quality polished one-carat (0,2 gram) diamond. Religion can feel a bit like that. There is so much superstition, dogma and false beliefs to every truth. But if you look hard enough you may find that religions aren’t solely devoted to the pursuit of narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy. Knock down a dogma and you may find a shining truth. From underneath a commandment you may unearth a useful pointer to the nature of reality. A current of transdual truth runs through all the major religions. These truths are often tucked away in some hidden corner of the religions, where they are often filed under the label *mysticism*. That’s not to say that all and sundry that carries that label represents ultimate truth. But it is within this stew called mysticism that we find the most interesting aspects of religion. In order to extract the

gold nuggets buried within the religions, let's take a moment to see if we can demystify mysticism.

The mystical aspect of Islam is most clearly pronounced in the tradition of Sufism. You may have heard of the Sufi called Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, better known as just Rumi, or at least read one of the many beautiful quotes taken from his work. Here is one of my favorites of his: *"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there."*

The Jewish tradition is a wonderful supply of mystical insight. One of its mystics even unwittingly ended up as the founder of the world's most popular cult, Christianity, which in turn has provided its own stream of mystics like Meister Eckhart and Dame Julian of Norwich. The Advaita Vedanta sub-school of Hinduism is a veritable treasure trove of mystical insight, and the same goes for the Dzogchen school of thought that has been incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism.

How come the people who have realized the nature of reality are branded mystics, and the most accurate parts of religions as mysticism? It's a rather suspect label they've been handed, but I think we will find there are several perfectly non-mystical explanations for that.

On my own spiritual journey I had many experiences that at the time appeared very mystical indeed. Even before I became a dedicated seeker such experiences would occur. When I was fourteen I remember spending a whole night contemplating the meaning of my young life. It was one of those magic Nordic summer nights where the day goes to sleep leaving the lights on, inviting sleepless souls to peek into its dreams. As the morning plotted its imminent coup on the dying night, I decided to inwardly pursue my feelings, in a faint hope I might locate their source. Off I went,

and not once did I blink with my inner eye. The discovery I made was baffling. At the end of the pursuit I found... nothing. My feelings were homeless. These feelings in all their various flavors, be it pride, joy or anger, that seemed so overwhelmingly convincing and real—they possessed no root. They were but ghosts that appeared from nowhere and disappeared into the same nothingness. This was a very liberating discovery to an adolescent boy. And very mystical.

My discovery all those years back was a correct perception of a fact that traditions such as Buddhism know so well: the impermanent nature of feelings and thoughts. At the time I intuited that the discovery was genuine, and it changed my life so much for the better. However, I grew up outside any spiritual community, and I didn't find any hooks out there in the so-called reality upon which to hang the insight. As the years rolled by my life ended up the way most lives do: as a testament to the abyss between a relative self-identity convinced of its fundamental separateness, and the transdual nature of reality.

Many years later, during my time as a seeker, I had another experience. This time I envisioned some sort of liquid substance I vaguely identified as love entering my heart. The liquid kept on flowing in until it finally filled the whole heart and threatened to burst it wide open. There was a sensation of throbbing pain as the heart was full to the brim and the liquid kept pouring into it, increasing the pressure against its boundaries. Then, there was a joyful feeling of release as the liquid suddenly spilled outwards and commenced to fill the whole body. If this sounds a bit odd to you now, I guarantee you the sensation felt even odder to me at the time. But after it subsided I was left with a feeling that this experience was somehow important. I just couldn't figure out why.

Looking back at this mystical vision I no longer find it very odd or mystical at all. It is now obvious that the heart in the vision represented my relative self. The heart's boundaries were the limitations built around this relative self-identity. The release—the bursting open of the heart—was the solution to the suffering experienced by the separate self banging up against the walls of separation: A self-identity upgrade from a separate self that believes itself to exist merely *in* the moment, to one identifying as the moment—from self to Self. This vision started out as a mystical insight. As my understanding of the nature of reality grew deeper, I became better equipped to interpret the experience. I now see it as a poetic reminder from my absolute Self to my relative self.

So, one of the reasons mysticism is branded by us as mystical, is due to our lack of understanding. To someone whose experience with existential wonder is limited to the pondering of next week's Powerball numbers a close encounter with the transdual nature of reality will indeed seem mystical.

Another reason behind the mystique is of a more pragmatic nature. In this day and age I may feel reasonably safe sitting at my desk here in Norway wasting some digital ink writing about the nature of reality. It wasn't always so. In many parts of the world it still isn't. In the grand scheme of things the freedom to share insights like those conveyed in this book is a rare treat. Throughout history dabbling with alternative narratives concerning the nature of reality has been an activity connected with life-threatening peril.

Human societies have traditionally stuck to *one* such narrative and one only. Different societies may have overlapped geographically, but within their ranks the norm has been for a society to adhere to a uniform, fundamental religious conviction.

There have of course been opposing factions within these overriding narratives, but if you were to doubt your way completely beyond that narrative, the road to the nearest Golgotha, guillotine, or admission to some particularly unserviceminded psychiatric ward has always been mercilessly short.

The alpha male or female of these societies, be it king or queen, caesar, chairman, pope, elders, or board of directors have often taken on the part as God's own representatives on Earth, a link between the Almighty and his subjects. To challenge the reigning understanding of the nature of reality has thus automatically implied challenging the alpha male or female. Through the extension of some premature and extremely pro-active euthanasia, alpha males and females throughout history shows exactly what God does to those who dare mess with the God of the alpha male or female. It may be a bad case of circular logic, but it's a deadly effective one.

The Vatican has historically turned this circular logic into an art form. Many of you will have heard of the destiny handed out to people such as Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei, to name but two of the many individuals who in different ways have challenged the status quo and subsequently suffered the Vatican's mastery of the dark arts.

The Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza contended that everything that exists in Nature (i.e., everything in the Universe) is one Reality (substance) and there is only one set of rules governing the whole of the reality which surrounds us and of which we are part. His contemporary brethren were not amused. Here is an excerpt of the *cherem* or excommunication of him written by the Talmud Torah congregation of Amsterdam in 1656:

Espinoza should be excommunicated and expelled from the people of Israel. By the decree of the angels, and by the command of the holy men, we excommunicate, expel, curse and damn Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of all the Holy Congregation, in front of these holy Scrolls with the six-hundred-and-thirteen precepts which are written therein [...] Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down, and cursed be he when he rises up; cursed be he when he goes out, and cursed be he when he comes in. The Lord will not spare him; the anger and wrath of the Lord will rage against this man and bring upon him all the curses which are written in this book, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven.

It appears that the 17th century equivalent to reality show judges had way more bite than the current lot of prime time excommunicators. Religious excommunication reaches its own twisted logical conclusion in apostasy. Unfortunately apostasy is more than a historical footnote. According to a poll published in 2013 by the Pew Research Center, an overwhelming majority of the population in such influential Muslim countries as Egypt and Pakistan still support the death penalty for anyone who leaves the religion.

The poll supports the notion that it isn't just alphas that are less than enthusiastic whenever someone challenges the reigning understanding of reality. History is full to the brim with ordinary citizens who without any threat to their wealth or power—they've had little to none of both—have taken it upon themselves to permanently silence those annoying voices whispering: "You are something more." "I am who I am, damn it!" runs the riposte, all while aiming a particularly pointy stone or a gun at the heretic.

This blatant lack of enthusiasm shown towards alternative thinkers on this the most central field of thinking, has led proponents of unorthodox worldviews to carefully wrap their theories up in cotton wool. The onus has been on rendering the theories inaccessible to the governing bodies or other outsiders, while simultaneously maintaining the transformative power of the message to the open-minded spiritual seeker. The word mysticism is itself derived from the Greek “muo”: *to keep the mouth shut, to conceal*, and also from the word “muelo” which means *to initiate*. This way of conveying the nature of reality is highly rational (living is good—death by pointy stones, not so much). It has however rendered some of the historical pointers to the transdual nature of reality to appear even more mystical than otherwise necessary.

Sometimes the transdual message had to be hidden not only linguistically, but also physically. The Tibetan school of Dzogchen represents a transdual approach to the nature of reality. Dzogchen supposedly originated in a kingdom called Oddiyana situated in the Swat valley of what today is Pakistan. The king of Oddiyana was worried that Dzogchen could unsettle his power base, and wanted to make sure the teachings weren't allowed to spread. He therefore forbade any contact by outsiders with those who had realized the teachings.

According to legend envoys were sent to Oddiyana from the pre-Buddhist Tibetan kingdom of Zhang Zhung. Their mission was to learn more about these Dzogchen teachings of which they had heard rumors. They circumvented the prohibitions put into place by the Oddiyana king through secretly sneaking in to receive instructions on Dzogchen at night. The teachings were written down using goat milk on a canvas of white silk. In this way the writings only became visible once the silk was exposed to sunlight, and the envoys made sure that only happened after they had safely returned to Zhang Zhung.

Another mystifying factor is time and place. The Western spiritual seeker is often confronted with texts that were recorded an awfully long time ago in a place and culture very foreign to the one we now live in. With religious texts, the focus is often fixed on remaining as true to the original source as possible. This is an admirable ambition, but it has two major drawbacks. The first is the practical difficulties of actually maintaining the source clean. The other is the dwindling return that the original teaching, even when perfectly preserved, will bestow upon the seeker who comes in touch with it.

Although the truth the teachings point to—that we exist as this moment and not merely *in* it—is one and the same, the content of this moment and thus the context of the people seeking this truth is constantly changing. A teaching becomes popular to the extent it is able to dress the nature of reality up in garments that make it accessible to its contemporaries, applying familiar references and communicating in a lingo people can relate to. However, the wheel of time keeps turning. The very same cultural make-up that at one time and within a certain culture was applied in order to effectively transmit the nature of reality, will in a different time and culture turn into obstacles—blurring the truth from the seeker.

We've seen how spirituality that is taken to be mystical often isn't very mystical at all. Now, let's check out an example of the opposite: spirituality that is often regarded as non-mystical, but actually carries a mystical essence. This spirituality isn't hidden in a corner of the major religions, but is proudly displayed as the very heart of them. I'm thinking of the golden rules that exist throughout all the main spiritual traditions. Hinduism offers this version: "This is the sum of duty; do nothing onto others that you would not have them do to you." Inquire about the essence of Christianity and you may be told: "Love your neighbor like yourself." Buddhism

chimes in with: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful," and from Judaism we learn that: "What is hurtful to you, do not do to your fellow man. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary."

Ok, you may say, but this isn't mysticism, is it? Well, on one level it isn't. Remember how the word religion is derived from the Latin: *re ligare*? *Ligare* means *to connect*, but it also means *to bind together*. Religion is about providing transcendence but it has another function too: binding together the community of believers. It is within this non-mystical context of providing a normative moral framework that the golden rules are usually interpreted.

However, this interpretation leaves the relative self stuck in a mode of separation, condemned to an eternal flight between good and evil, salvation and damnation, and all the other dualities. The important thing to realize about the golden rules is that they were not originally retrieved by relative self-identities engaged in the existential binary bingo based on fear and desire. Nor are they ultimately normative instructions on how to live life while sticking to the dream of absolute separation.

Treat your neighbor like yourself, isn't even such a tempting proposition for the neighbor when coming from a dualistic perspective. I know of many occasions in my own life where I have treated myself horribly. The relative self-identity can be very vicious, and for some reason it doesn't spare itself from the scorn. *How can you be so stupid*, the inner voice asks itself. *You're completely useless!* Heaven forbid I treat others like that.

In reality the golden rules are mystical postcards sent from the realm of having realized the transdual nature of reality. From the Jewish tradition we find this version of the golden rule with a twist: A seeker asks a rabbi what the essence of the faith is.

The rabbi proceeds to kick him down the stairs where he came from. The seeker then approaches another rabbi who gives him the golden rule mentioned above, about not doing to your fellow man what is hurtful to you. Why did the first rabbi kick the seeker down the stairs? Because to remain locked in a self-identity that believes itself to be separate, but adhering to a golden rule of morality is the binding aspect of religion. The transcending aspect requires that you yourself go to the place where the truth that lies behind the rule is realized.

Treat your neighbor like yourself, should be interpreted literally, as in treat your neighbor as another manifestation of your Self. Having reconnected your relative self with your absolute Self, the golden rules are but self-evident rules of life. *Treat your neighbor like your Self*. “Why wouldn’t I? That’s what she is.” As much as your neighbor and you and I are separate individuals, the separation isn’t absolute. We share the same indivisible moment. The only moment there is. Which is who we all are. Again, from a transdual point of view the message put forth in the golden rules is as obvious as telling your right hand to refrain from cutting off the left. No super-human efforts are needed on behalf of the relative self to adhere to the golden rules. One is no longer driven by fear of divine punishment (ultimately hell) or desire for a free pass to the eternal afterlife VIP lounge in the sky. In the words of Aristotle: *I have gained this from philosophy—to do by my own accord what others do only from the fear of law.*

Transtheism

Although we can find mystical currents of transdual thought running through all the traditional religions, these religions themselves can hardly be said to be transdual. The major spiritual traditions here in the West, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are what we call monotheistic religions. Contrary to many of the polytheistic traditions that preceded them they believe in *one* almighty God. A red herring running through the Old Testament of the Bible is the transition of one people, the Jewish, from polytheism to monotheism. It is a testament to the beautiful narrative qualities of that tradition that the father of Abraham, himself the father of monotheism, is said to have been a manufacturer of polytheistic idols.

Many of you reading this will have some experience with meditation. The first step of meditating is to focus the mind. Upon introspection and through single pointed meditation we find that our mind isn't really the steady entity we had taken for granted. Instead we discover what is referred to as *the monkey mind*, due to the jumpy nature of its thoughts. I like to think of the transition from polytheism to monotheism as akin to this first step of meditation.

But meditation doesn't stop at quieting the monkey mind. Once a more stable state of mind has been achieved we progress towards further goals. We may take up more advanced techniques and find that our body too isn't really the steady entity we have taken for granted. Instead we discover a fluid flow of energy, an energy that isn't confined to the boundaries of the body. Or we may take up an exchange meditation such as the Tibetan technique called *tonglen*, where we visualize taking on all the anxieties of another and giving whatever peace we possess in return. The

point of these more advanced meditations is always the same: to dissolve the dreamed up absolute barrier between our relative self and the rest of the moment.

In the same vein, religion shouldn't stop at monotheism. Monotheism may focus the chaotic worldview of polytheism, but there is still a lot of work to be done. We need to move beyond monotheism to transtheism. Throughout this book we have seen the illusory nature of a God that exists separate from the rest of creation. In order for the almighty God that monotheists claim to worship to be truly almighty, the believer must transcend the concept of a separate God. How does one transcend the concept of a separate God? By merging with God. How does one merge with God? By admitting what is already happening—that you are this moment in its entirety.

Nonduality

Much of current spirituality that is supposed to represent an alternative to traditional religion remains monotheistic at heart. It just replaces God with other concepts. Some of you will be familiar with the term *nonduality*. Nonduality is a school of thought that during the last decades has gained a lot of traction in the West. Its teachings draw upon some of the most interesting parts of the spiritual traditions. Combined, these nondual teachings are indeed turning into something of a spiritual tradition in its own right.

The problem is that a lot of what passes for nonduality in the spiritual marketplace is but variations on the theme of the Voyeur that we acquainted ourselves with in the chapter devoted to that beautiful yet partial face of Self. The

very term *nonduality* in itself invites trouble. It entices us to exalt something that lie beyond the world of dualities or the world of form. In traditional Western religions that role used to be assigned to God, but he is of course very much of a yesterday's man. The streets don't change but maybe the names, and in much of today's cutting edge spirituality God has been replaced by words such as witness, awareness, silence, consciousness, the source, etc. These concepts are given an a priori status to the dualistic world of the senses, which is often regarded as an illusion.

This is where it all goes wrong. The teachers of these forms of religious belief aren't bad people, and the states they guide you to are real and often beautiful partial manifestations of this moment. However, if you want to realize the full nature of reality, they are not it. Witness, source, consciousness, silence, or awareness doesn't exist outside the world of dualities. The two are dependent arising entities. Silence can only be known in reference to the noisy world of duality. The Witness only exists in relation to what is witnessed. The source and its outpourings are one and the same, and is who you are. Awareness and that of which it is aware are one and the same, and is who you are.

The infatuation with the Voyeur or the Witness that dominates much of today's spirituality indeed resembles the birth of a new religion. Different people arrive at the state called the Witness. They confirm to each other that this is the final destination. The mutual confirmation serves to calm the lingering suspicion that there may be yet another stop waiting around the corner—beyond this state. Established maps of practices on how to arrive at the Witness are shared and new ones created. All we really need now is to appoint a chief witness, and a case could be made that the crime of creating another hierarchical, conventional religion is being committed. The judge called the nature of reality, however, isn't impressed.

The exchange of God for witness, awareness, silence or what have you, is just another way for the relative self to maintain the illusion of fundamental separation, only a subtler version of it. A separation that is necessary to maintain the very existence of the relative self as an independent entity. The more intensely I worship or claim to believe in an outside entity, be it God, witness, awareness, consciousness or whatever name we chose, the more intensely I myself become a separate entity—a mini-God in my own right as it were. In other words, the more I claim to love some God/Spirit/Truth while maintaining a belief in separation, the more I actually deny the real all-pervading God/Spirit/Truth.

Transduality—a new religion

And then, finally, the jig is up. All the figs we use in order to hide our self from our Self have been dismantled. The cosmic game of hide and seek is over. Nonduality when applying concepts such as witness, awareness, silence or other names for an entity that is still believed to somehow be separate from this moment is the final fig. To those who share my vision of the nature of reality I therefore propose an orderly retreat into Transduality.

Transduality is hardly a religion. It is merely a hypothesis about the nature of reality based on observation of that reality. The hypothesis suggests that there is ultimately no fundamental separation between the observer, our relative self who exists in this moment, and the observed, the rest of this boundless moment the relative self exists in. The only logical conclusion to that lack of separation is that you

and I exist as this moment, and not merely *in* it. Anyone open to perform the observation experiment may realize the truthfulness of the hypothesis.

I prefer to think of Transduality as a *realigion*. A realigion should have some tenets, so here are the three tenets of Transduality:

Tenet #1 – *We exist as this moment—not merely in it.*

Tenet #2 – *Nothing exists beyond this moment.*

This tenet is included to avoid the belief in some entity that is somehow beyond this infinite moment, entities that are given names such as God, witness, awareness, consciousness, silence or source.

Tenet #3 – *The relative self is transcended yet included in the absolute Self.*

The third tenet points to one of the main reasons why I have chosen the term *Transduality*. It pays homage to the integral philosopher Ken Wilber and his notion: *Transcend AND include*. This concept helps us avoid an error that often arises during seeking, where the relative self is frowned upon or even denied by the new self-identity. If I take on the identity of the Voyeur or the Witness, awareness or silence, my relative self is often left in a precarious position. My intellect may understand that I am Oneness. But that lousy relative self keeps on failing to live up to this understanding. The solution often lies in exalting the absolute over the relative, or even to altogether deny the relative self. “There is no I,” is a frequently used phrase among a particular spiritual crowd. It may sound ridiculous to you, but it is widespread in certain quarters.

It has its own logic to support it. The fundamentally separate relative self of old has been realized to be an illusion; hence it makes sense to the seeker to altogether

discard it. Ultimately such a tactic is just a final trick played out by the relative self. It surrenders the often body-centered old self-identity and claims to no longer have an "I". All of this posturing is acted out from the comfort of a new self-identity as a concept, such as witness, awareness, consciousness or silence. In this case the relative self may have been transcended, but it has yet to be included. Spirituality of this kind often may offer us a sense of divinity, but it also strongly imposes on our humanity. (While anti-spiritual approaches often grants us humanity, but deny us our inherent divinity).

Transduality grants all of us our full divinity AND our full humanity. We now know who we are—this boundless moment. Our relative self is an integral and welcome part of that moment. It may mess up from time to time, but that's all right. Established in a new self-identity as the absolute Self, as the moment in its entirety, we accept the relative self like a mother accepts her child. The mother doesn't disown her child when it falls or fails.

There is another reason not to disregard the child, the relative self. We realize that the child is as vital to the nature of reality as the mother is. A mother isn't a priori to the child. Without a mother there is no child, but also, without a child there is no mother, only a potential mother. The two are dependent arising entities, and we are both, mother and child.

CommUnity

Transduality is the sharing of this secret of who we really are, who *you* really are. I take great pleasure in sharing this open secret with you as its message is one of joy, and I hope you too will share it with other kindred souls. But this is a realigion, not a religion. Feel free to spread the transdualitis virus to anyone who might show an interest, but always remember that this is not about chucking some narrative on the nature of reality down the throats of people who aren't asking. Such actions belong to beliefs that need to have cement poured over them lest they be blown away on the first gust of wind blown their way by the nature of reality.

To those who are asking, Transduality can fill at least two wonderful functions. On the absolute level Transduality provides a clear-cut answer to that perennial question: Who am I? You know that answer well by now: We exist as this boundless moment—not merely in it. On a relative level a transdual realigion will provide a community for those souls who happen to re-member their true Self. I love this quote by the actor Jim Carrey, obviously infected with the transdualitis virus:

“Some people go to the Super Bowl—I am the Super Bowl! I’m the stadium, I’m the vendors outside, I’m the crack dealer on the corner, I’m everything, there’s no end to it, and it’s so much fun!”

This is as good a description of the transdual experience as any I’ve ever read from Asian masters who lived in a century with three digits in it. But what would make this experience at the Super Bowl even more fun? Sharing it with a community would.

Such a community will also facilitate the journey for individuals on the brink of taking that final leap of faith on the path to realizing the transdual nature of reality. Education and cultural input are but some of the many tools that help facilitate that leap. A gravity of consciousness is at play. It helped you and me both to more or less effortlessly identify as part of the human family, an identity that is quite an extraordinary achievement in the history of human self-identity. In the same manner, a mature transdual community will help make the transition from merely identifying *in* the moment to identifying as the moment much more effortless for future seekers.

I've been a bit unkind to traditional religions in this chapter, but that is not to take away from the fact that they also represent invaluable treasure chests of human insights. The transdual perspective is compatible with all these spiritual traditions. If you are part of such a tradition, I suggest you stick to it and just add a few pinches of Transduality, like the three tenets, to your particular spiritual path. All spiritual traditions carry the transdual perspective in their heart, and applying the tenets to your spiritual seeking will help you to tap into the most valuable parts of your own path or tradition. Spiritual practice isn't a waste of time. As the Zen saying goes: awakening is an accident, but spiritual practice makes us accident-prone.

TRANSDUALITY 101 – We are this

PART II – The self in the Self

A Match Made in Heaven

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself you have built against it.

—Rumi

We got receipts

What happens to me after I upgrade my self-identity? Or to you, of course vastly more important: What happens to *you*? Thunderous lightning. Oceans of fire. Vivid rainbows. There are many preconceptions as to how a realization of the nature of reality will be experienced by the lucky seeker who becomes a finder. A friend of mine put forth a more mundane concern about the post-realization existence: “Will I remember to pay my bills on time?” he wondered.

The truth is that realization falls woefully short in the pyrotechnics department, and that yes, you will still remember to pay your bills. However, the relative self will benefit from some very interesting perks that easily outshine the brightest of rainbows. The union between the relative self and the absolute Self is indeed a match made in heaven.

Before embarking on this voyage of seeing how identifying as the moment and not merely *in* it will affect you, I should emphasize that these welcome perks to an upgrade in self-identity are the exclusive domain of true transdual realization. These waters are not accessible to a self-identity sailing under a false flag of Transduality in order to escape suffering, or to claim happiness and love on behalf of its still relative self-identity. We can fool ourselves, and we may even succeed in fooling others, but we cannot fool our Self.

In sickness and in health

Slicing this boundless moment into bits and pieces comes at a price: it causes suffering. In the end nearly all suffering boils down to feelings of incompleteness. At different times in my own life, I have been convinced that if I could only get *this* woman or *that* house, child, cure, degree, money, enlightenment—the list goes on and on—my suffering would cease and my happiness complete. But alas, stuck in a relative self-identity, nothing can fill the abyss between who we *think* we are, and who we *really* are. All the money in the world can't buy off the pain, the hurt and the suffering. All the spiritual achievements or all the beauty, power, and sex are equally

inadequate band-aids for the wound we have cut wide open in the midst of the oneness we are.

When we are confronted by situations that make us suffer, we try to eradicate that suffering through applying an infinite variety of tactics. We may confront the suffering, hide from it, bargain with it, or simply give in to it. The problem is, none of our tactics seem to be working—not in the long run, anyway. We may even desensitize ourselves completely in order not to hurt so badly, but such a numbed approach to life is indeed one of the worst sufferings there is. To surrender the openness that allows us take in the full beauty of life is not the true cure to suffering.

Throughout this our fight against suffering, we maintain a blind spot for our self-identity. Unconsciously, we take it for granted that a relative self-identity—however subtle—is who we ultimately are. Equipped with such an identity, our very manner of going about this thing called life inevitably causes the very suffering we then turn around and claim to detest.

Saying that a transdual upgrade in self-identity will heal your suffering because it solves all your problems would be false. Closer to the truth is that it *dissolves* most of the problems. Dissolves, because the overwhelming majority of our problems revolve around how the relative self can control a world of outside objects, in the shape of the rest of the content in the moment.

In our daily life we face an endless parade of choices. We want *this* to happen in order to make us happy, and we definitely want to avoid *that* in order to avoid suffering. The list of these wishes of ours may be related to family relations, to struggles in our love life; to health issues... the possibilities are endless. The problem

is that all our wishes, whatever they are, will always orbit around a constant, namely our relative self-identity.

Once we upgrade this constant—the relative self-identity—around which this world of suffering orbits, all the suffering that was related to such a partial perception of self vanishes. This includes the vast, vast majority of the suffering we experience in our daily lives. Most of it is concerned with the positioning, scheming and representation of our relative self-identity in relation to the overwhelming parts of our moment that we fail to include in our self-identity.

A dog walking down the street is doomed to sniff every single lamppost it passes. Absolutely everything can take on the role of irresistible magnets to those nostrils with a dog attached to them: every street corner, every pile of litter, the perfumed business cards left by fellow canines. After the initial nasal inspection, the object in question may receive a dose of holy water through the squirting of some back-legged juice. Or, the dog may choose to turn its nose up, squeeze in, and heed the siren call of the next lamppost. Sniff, then squirt or squeeze, the ritual is obligatory. It is what a dog does—what it is.

It is in a manner not dissimilar to this we are doomed to relate to the rest of the moment as long as we believe ourselves to be inherently separate from it. Absolutely everything that happens to appear in the moment must be regarded and interpreted in relation to our incomplete perception of self. We will then apply one of our countless concepts to like or dislike, approve or disapprove, laugh or cry—squirt or squeeze—in reaction to whatever object or event appearing out there in the never-ending stream of consciousness lampposts. As the years roll by, we turn into ever so

efficient sniffers. Almost without thinking, we perform our routine. This is what a relative self-identity does and is.

As long as we remain convinced about the absolute separateness of our existence, this *modus operandi* remains our destiny. This way of dealing with life causes excess suffering. We are of course not criticizing the wonderful ability to discriminate between objects. The problems arise because the measuring stick against which all objects and events are being judged—namely our self-identity—is inaccurate, incomplete and out of tune with the nature of reality. And since our measuring stick is wrong, it follows naturally that our judgments and the choices we make based on our discriminations also suffer. The very decisions that were supposed to help us *avoid* suffering might as well cause more suffering. At the end of the day we end up endlessly complicating our own lives and those of others.

A few years back the book *The Secret* written by Rhonda Byrne enjoyed phenomenal success worldwide. The premise of the book was that we could increase our happiness through positive thinking based on the law of attraction. I don't doubt our ability to affect our own reality. There is a reason Tibetan philosophy refers to the mind as *the wish-fulfilling jewel*. However, I do know that *The Secret* and most other self-help books out there cannot deliver us the lasting happiness we crave for. I know that because they possess an insufficient understanding of the self they are supposed to help. If the definition of self is incomplete or downright mistaken, how can we trust these vehicles to deliver that self to the desired destination of happiness? We can't. When we don't have a clue as to the nature of the wish maker, it may even be sound advice to be careful what we wish for.

Sure, some of our previous problems may persist even after we upgrade, but even those problems take on a completely different flavor and a lot less urgency once our self-identity is aligned with the nature of reality. Our self-identity not only colors our perception of the world around us. We and the world we perceive are ultimately two sides of the same coin.

Have you noticed how the same walk down a familiar street will take on completely different flavors? One day all the people you pass on your way look graciously beautiful. Other days they all look grey and sad, and most hapless of them all: she or he trying to avoid your gaze there in the shop window's reflection. One day, all the buildings that you pass are designed by a masterful architect, creating the perfect backdrop to your perfect day. The next day the very same structures are misshaped and threatening lumps of concrete. One day the drizzle is a refreshing heavenly shower. The next it is a personal moist insult. In other words: Who we are, is what we see.

As spiritual seekers we are prone to a particular case of blurred vision. We have to a certain degree seen through the limitations that come built into a relative self-identity, but we have yet to be fully connected to our absolute Self—this moment in its entirety. We have one foot firmly planted in a decaying relative self-identity, while the other has taken a step forward and now finds itself somewhere in the unknown. The two footholds are pulling in opposite directions and our perception is marred by the resulting groin strains.

As a father, there is one thing more painful than your own suffering, and that is the suffering of your offspring. The following stories from two times my daughter fell ill

may help illuminate how a transdual upgrade in self-identity changes our approach to suffering.

The first story is from when my little baby girl Vitoria was just four weeks old. She came down with a fever and we took her to the doctor. He had some tests taken, and was worried she might have caught meningitis. Vitoria was rushed to the hospital to undergo further examinations to find out whether the doctor's suspicions were correct. At one point I had to secure my daughter's head while they were extracting twenty drops of fluid from her spine. This is a painful procedure, and every second of watching my tiny baby go through such pain broke my heart.

After the procedure, Vitoria's mother and I were told to wait for two hours before the test results were ready. Those were some very long hours. At the time I still imagined myself to be fundamentally separate from the rest of the moment. I remember some events from that waiting room that I think highlights some of the flakier sides to such a dualistic self-identity. Firstly, there were of course the usual thoughts of: *Why is this happening to her? Why is this happening to me?* There was also some hard bargaining taking place: *If you let her be well I promise to be a better human being*, I inwardly vowed to whoever might be in charge of proceedings.

To make things worse, due to the stressful events of the day I had not had anything to eat. At one point the hunger hit me, and my mind shifted from worrying about my princess to thinking about food. After a short while an inner voice kicked in: *What a terrible father you are! Your daughter is fighting for her life, and you're thinking about food?* Such rang the accusations raised against myself by myself. A little later I looked over at Vitoria's mother. For some reason I found her very attractive at this moment, and I started fantasizing about sex. Again the inner sheriff

mounted his high horse: *Really? Your daughter's life is on the line, and you are thinking about sex? What kind of a monster are you?* Such is the schizophrenic ways of a relative self-identity. I should point out that these thoughts of food and sex were short glimpses. Most of the time I was focused on worrying about the wellbeing of my little girl. Vitoria recovered. It turned out to be a false alarm.

The second story took place almost a year later, as my daughter was again struck by serious illness. Our little family was living in Brazil at the time, and throughout one late October afternoon Vitoria was running an increasingly high temperature. As day turned into night her body felt as if on fire, her pale skin had turned a shade of ash, and her lips were bluish. As I checked her body temperature it clocked in at over 105 degrees. I immediately called for a ride to the hospital. When the car arrived and I reached down to pick up my little girl, her tiny body felt simultaneously rigid and twitchy. In the passenger seat of the car heading for the hospital, Vitoria lay in my lap. Her body was still rigid, her eyes tilted upwards. There was froth on her mouth. I had no idea what was happening to my precious little princess, but there was a very real and ominous feeling that she might actually be dying, right there in my arms.

As we neared the hospital we passed through a traffic roundabout. Some authors of books like this one say that realizing the nature of reality was a gradual process. Others claim to know the exact moment when the ultimate truth finally dawned upon them. I'm pretty sure however, that none of them had the realization occur in a traffic roundabout. That's what happened to me.

Now, at this point in my life I had chucked all spiritual efforts down the toilet. After years of being an avid seeker, I had decided to quit. After the initial feelings of

elevation born from spiritual insights, I felt that my life as a seeker was only bringing me down. When Vitoria was born, I jumped off the seeking bandwagon altogether. No more meditating, no more reading of spiritual literature, no more pondering the nature of reality. I traded all of that in for a single-minded focus on the changing of diapers.

Back to the story. As we were driving through that traffic roundabout two blocks from the hospital, I turned my head to look out the rolled down window of my passenger seat. Right then and there, I realized the essence of all the spiritual teachings I had previously grappled with. I realized that there is no inside and no outside—that this moment is it. That this moment has no limits, and that it is who I am—who we are. A shift in self-identity took place.

We arrived at the hospital, and the experience couldn't have been more different from the first story I told you. This time around there were no feelings of being the victim of circumstance. There was no, *why is this happening to her or me*. I was the circumstances, at this point very serious circumstances. Nor was I bargaining with invisible unknown entities in charge of proceedings. My focus was on how my relative self could be of greatest possible help to my daughter and the medical staff. I didn't think about food or sex, but if such thoughts had occurred, that would have been okay too. It would just have been immediately recognized as the voice of certain aspects of my relative self, a self that had been transcended and then included into my new identity.

During what turned out to be a long and very arduous night, the dualistic voice tried to edge its way back into the picture a time or two. This time it wasn't accusing me, but rather trying to get itself back behind the self-identity steering wheel through

scoring some brownie points: *Isn't this great*, it said. *You did it. We did it. We realized the nature of reality! How great is that?* But it was too late. I had seen through the false premises of such a schizophrenic mode of thinking. There and then, and in the years that have followed, that dualistic voice had lost its power. It still reappears from time to time, as I'm sure it always will. It is like the resurfacing ripples of a once mighty swell. It is however recognized for what it is, and I find that upon welcoming even this witnessing voice into the fullness that I am, it loses interest pretty quickly. It craves the position of being top dog in the identity hierarchy, and when it realizes that's not going to happen, it tends to quietly lurk away with its tail between its legs.

Vitoria again recovered from her illness. She was suffering from fever convulsions. It's a malady that looks frightening, but luckily it barks louder than it bites, and already the next morning she was feeling much, much better.

I wanted to share these two stories with you because I think they shed some interesting light on the topic of suffering. If you do upgrade your self-identity from *in* the moment to *as the moment*, all suffering will not cease. Neither for your relative self, nor for your loved ones or the rest of the moment that surrounds you. You will experience lots of sad events in your life even after your upgrade. To identify as this moment in its entirety isn't some intellectual seroxat designed to vaccinate you into immunity towards an evil and unforgiving world out there. On the contrary, upgrading self-identity will sensitize you to all of the content in this moment. More intensely than ever you will experience tears, sadness and all the other side effects to this thing called life. But liberated from the exclusive identity tyranny of the relative self, your take on suffering will change completely. You will no longer identify as a person *in here* who is threatened by ominous events *out there*. There will still be huge waves building up on the sea of life, but they no longer threaten to break onto you. You are

those waves, and even more importantly, you are also the deep ocean of which even the most massive wave is but a tiny ripple. You are now free to shrug the dust (and the confetti) from off of your shoulders and head fearlessly into the world.

A relative self-identity will react to any situation with fear. Or desire. One out of two. After your final upgrade you will no longer look to escape suffering by heading down that binary road where pain is only ever increased. That does not mean you'll dodge the situations at hand. Not at all. After upgrading you will identify as the whole situation. Look it in the eye, enter the situation fully. And to the extent the situation requires a solution, the solution will reveal itself from your new vantage point, from within.

When action really is called upon, you will act, and you will do so wholeheartedly. But many times you will find that the solution to a perceived problem is not to be found in action at all. While an imagined separate self-identity incessantly will inflict pain upon itself and others trying to navigate the mother ship of self-identity through an alien and potentially threatening universe out there, the upgraded self will recognize that the solution to its problems often lies in non-doing. Not that you become idle, or that you refrain from all actions, but rather that you stop making what are essentially meaningless sacrifices on the altar of the god of relative self. A god that grows fatter and fatter, but never ever becomes satisfied.

Is it good for me, for my family, my friends, my people? You will still make these considerations after you upgrade your self-identity from *in* the moment to *as* the moment, but you are no longer a slave to them. You will no longer automatically jump every time someone or something touches the threads of fear and desire that

control the various layers of a relative self-identity. Upgrading self-identity replaces reaction with action.

We've talked about suffering as a problem, but suffering can also be a great gift and a facilitator for growth. The arrival of a new life is a stellar example of the transformative powers of suffering. During a pregnancy the mother-to-be usually moves through three phases. The first phase lasts for approximately the first 12 weeks of the pregnancy. Her body is adapting to a lot of change, and she suffers from nausea and other physical discomforts. Once these changes have been incorporated, the future mother enters a pleasant phase. She's at ease with her new body and identity, and many mothers will look back on this phase with a particular fondness. However, this pleasantness comes to an end. The final weeks of the pregnancy are again very uncomfortable. The discomfort prepares the woman for what's to come. And then, finally, for the woman to become a mother she has to pass through some of the worst physical pain imaginable. At the end of this suffering a new self awaits. Not only for the mother who experiences a massive change to her relative self, but also in the shape of a brand new relative baby self.

Are you experiencing some feelings of suffering in your life right now? Even if you don't fully upgrade from identifying *in* the moment to identifying *as* the moment, try to imagine how it would feel if this moment in its entirety was your true Self. How would that affect the suffering you're going through? Maybe it would disappear completely? Or maybe the suffering wouldn't have gone away. Maybe a loved one is passing through serious illness. Identifying *as* the moment won't miraculously heal that person's illness. But I'm sure that identifying *as* the whole moment and not as a victim of circumstances will change your perception of what's happening, vastly improving your ability to care for that other person in the process. If it is your own

illness, you may indeed come to heal yourself. Keep in mind that healing doesn't have to be something magical, some instant cure. It can be a slow process towards health, a process that becomes unlocked by your upgrade in self-identity. True healing, after all, is always to be found in the wholeing.

When I talk to, hear or read about people who have realized the nature of reality I'm astonished by how many of these stories include a traumatic trigger. Depression, the illness of a loved one or an existential crisis can be a way of forcing you into taking on a more expansive self-identity. In the words of the mystic poet Rumi: "The wound is the place where the light enters you." True as that may be, I hope this book can be a drop in a wave of a spirituality that makes it easier for seekers to realize the nature of reality without the need for such traumatic triggers. However, an upgrade in self-identity will inevitably be accompanied by *some* amount of pain. In the words of 19th century surgeon, biologist and Nobel Prize winner, Alexis Carrel: "Man cannot remake himself without suffering, for he is both the marble and the sculptor."

To love and to cherish

Let's wave the suffering goodbye for now. On the other side of a transdual shift in self-identity awaits a deeper happiness than you ever asked for. Not because a transdual self-identity *creates* this happiness, but rather because it stops creating suffering, and once the mud of the illusory relative self-identity settles, an amazingly profound happiness turns out to be our natural state.

Alienation and fear of death are common causes of human suffering. The gospel of materialism turns us into separate, isolated nodes in an alien universe. There can be no true flow or understanding between you and other nodes beyond some fleeting moments of shared mutual self-interests. It's a lonely place for sure.

Upgrading your self-identity weaves you seamlessly into the shared fabric of this moment. It's the end of alienation, because nothing is alien to who you really are. You are your life, all of it, all of the time. There is nothing lacking in this moment you are. Not that there actually is a thing or two lacking that you in your spiritual splendor graciously overlook. No, literally nothing lacking. What could ever be amiss when you are everything? You are complete. The relative self is a perfect expression of this completeness. Your own relative self, and everybody else's too. The existence of relative selves isn't some divine mistake or a giant evolutionary fuck up on a cosmic scale. You are holy, and so is everyone and everything else. Your relative self is never absolutely separate from all those other separate selves or the rest of the content in this and every moment. Rather, we are all more intimately connected than anything in the materialistic world of dualism. This signals the end of loneliness. The relative self is never alone.

The fear of death, which psychologists tell us is the root cause of so much suffering, is also incapacitated by a transdual upgrade. To identify as the moment and not merely *in* it means that the time has finally come to start living and to stop dying. Because this moment that we both are was never born and will never die. It only ever is. In order for death to be a possibility, this moment would need somewhere to die into—something beyond it. But nothing exists beyond this moment. All that arises is automatically included. Which implies the birth of a blessing called absolute aloneness. The absolute Self is always absolutely alone. It's hard to

describe the joy of knowing there is nothing whatsoever outside of your true Self. Nothing threatens it, not even death. Transdual happiness then, is to know that the relative self is never alone—and to know that the absolute Self always *is*.

What more can be said about the happiness of admitting your identity as the moment—not merely *in* it? Well, we can find clues in the ideals we aspire to in the world of dualities. All these ideals that relative selves grapple with, like love, freedom, safety, beauty and longevity are but pale imitations of qualities that are effortlessly inherent in the absolute Self. They are like echoes of a memory not quite lost. Whispering reminders from the Self to the self, guiding us home. Freedom is complete when you identify as the absolute Self—this infinite and eternal moment—because there are no boundaries. Beauty is everywhere when everywhere is God. Safety is secured when there is no one outside of you to threaten you. Eternal life is yours because this moment we all are was never born and will never die.

We remember these our shared ideals because although we think ourselves absolutely separate beings, that is of course actually never the case. However, the ideals will never be realized as long as we maintain the illusion that the relative self is all we are. The more we strive for freedom without actually realizing the nature of reality, the more it seems to elude us. Killing in the name of love is the ultimate defeat for the idealistic relative self.

Foremost amongst all our ideals is of course *love*. This violent thug grabs us all by the neck. Unleashes us skywards before mercilessly pulling us back down again. It is our backs towards its waiting, pointed knee. Love leaves us there in the gutter, helpless, as it proceeds to shove oceans of salt into our wide-open wounds to the heart. Kicks us about a bit just for the fun of it. Before it lifts us up anew. Comforts

us and tricks us onto dizzying merry-go-rounds. Like the planets, we too swirl unknowingly onwards. Until a sucker punch to the heart region vacuums whatever air we had left to breathe with. Again, it seduces us to get back up, and we comply, hesitantly, step by cautious step. Only to have our faith in love permanently flattened by a treacherous stab in the back when we least expect it. In short: How can one not love love?

The love that takes place between two relative self-identities is a beautiful, unconscious encounter with the nature of reality. Sometime during the mid-nineties, I found myself in a precarious position. The good news was that I was in a relationship with a woman with whom I was madly in love. The bad news was that this woman currently spent her days on the other side of the planet, in Bali, Indonesia. Internet communication was in those days yet to take the worst sting out of long distance relationships, and one night I found myself literally sick with longing. From out of that longing a poem transpired:

I was the wave / Ceaselessly roaming / Fearsome and foaming

Always distant / out of reach

You were / my beach

I am the ocean / Playfully cresting / Peaceful and resting

Never waver / never falter

You are / my water

At the time of writing this poem I had no interest in spirituality whatsoever, but in retrospect, it is obvious that beyond being an expression of love from a man longing for this amazing woman, the wave in the poem is also a metaphor for the relative self; the ocean for the absolute Self.

However, while there are definitely common denominators between the love between two relative selves and the realizing of the nature of reality, the differences are much wider. Established in an upgraded self-identity we shift our focus not only to *one* of the countless other objects present in this boundless moment—an object we now claim to love. Love between two people is at its finest an almost limitless twosomeness. But upgraded love is a limitless—not a twosome—affair. Transduality allows for your love to flow effortlessly out into this endless moment in its entirety. As transdual recognition fills our being, we also understand that this is not due to a process where our new self-identity makes love grow. Rather, we realize, it was the relative self-identity that imposed limitations on the always already underlying flow of love that is part of our true nature.

Love allows us, for a few hours, months—or for the lucky few, years—to shift our attention away from our own relative self, and instead over towards somebody else's. Being head over heels, we are released from flogging the dead horse that constitutes the relative self when perceived to be absolute. A self whose claim to absolute separateness isn't backed up by the nature of reality, and which therefore will never float by its own accord. To sustain the illusion of separateness we need to ceaselessly entertain the relative self, to feed it, to stroke it. We are the slaves of the relative self. Caught up in infatuation with another we forget all of this dread. It is such a welcome change of scenery to entertain, feed and stroke somebody else's self. In this forgetfulness our self is allowed to showcase some of its true potential.

Perhaps this is what the poet Vyatjeslav Kuprianov had in mind when he wrote the following verse published in the then Soviet Union in 1982:

Into my own face

I have carved the faces

of everyone I have ever loved.

Who is now to say,

that I am not beautiful?

A transdual upgrade also allows you, for the first time, to truly love yourself.

Even the most narcissistic relative self will mistreat itself. When the world fails to comply with our every wish, part of the blame is placed upon the relative self. *You are useless*, we tell ourselves! To the extent some self-love even exists, it is hardly of the unconditional kind. In order to deserve our own love we insist that the self lives up to an endless list of demands. I love myself, sure, but only if I behave in this or that manner, achieve that goal, is loved by another, and a host of other conditions. When you realize that you are this moment in its entirety, you are free not only to love all the other relative objects out there—you are also free to finally extend an unconditional loving embrace towards the long suffering relative self.

Till death do us part?

How about the romantic ideal of twosome love *till death do us part*? How is this ideal affected by a transdual shift in self-identity? To love everyone is as amazing as it sounds, and unconditional self-love is beautiful and a prerequisite for truly loving another, but *two* people can feel, hear and see things that are out of reach for other of love's constellations. Even before any shift in self-identity, two people can exchange thoughts and bodily fluids and morph into higher levels of being that would otherwise be inaccessible. Twosome can indeed be awesome, and we're not questioning that aspect of the romantic ideal. However, in real life the *till death do us part*-part seems to fall frightfully short of the ideal. In spite of dedicated worship from countless devoted disciples all over the world the lifelong kind of love between two people is a very rare blessing. Can a transdual upgrade prolong the beautiful twosome love beyond its usually somewhat ephemeral sell-by-date?

Relative selves too often find themselves on a possessive hunt for, or desperate flight from, intimacy with other equally imagined relative selves. Hunt or flight—all depending on the daily outlook of the relative self. *Daily* is maybe too generous a wording, since the random fluctuations may flutter much more frequently than it indicates. This lamentable fact of the nature of the relative self will of course render any ambition of a lasting loving relationship, and much less a life lasting one—into fanciful dream.

Besides, the relative self cannot desire only *one* other self. Add the ingredient called time and the chances are in overwhelming favor of it desiring others too. Sooner or later the two lovers will find the eye—the inner, the outer or both—sliding

towards another. First once, then twice, then frequently. It's inevitable. No longer are we liberated from the slavery of the relative self, but rather find ourselves more solidly chained to it than ever. It was but a question of time, and now we've been found out. Out of respect for the other half of the twosome we may mobilize enough self-control to stop the rest of the body from following the unfaithful drift of the eyes, but the damage has already been done—the spell has been broken. The relative self needs to control *all* the objects present in this moment, not just one of them. Romeo must die.

On a deeper plane, even the most worthy of attempts at life lasting twosomeness between relative selves fall short. At the start of this chapter we mentioned how the ideals entertained by the relative self are derived from qualities that are effortlessly inherent in the absolute Self. The absolute Self *is* unconditional love. It ceaselessly holds all things in its loving embrace, indiscriminately breathing life into all corners of itself. Our relative self is in reality never for a moment actually cut off from the absolute Self, and will therefore unconsciously try to recreate this unconditional love in the dualistic realm. The twosome couples long for a love they subconsciously know is real.

However, the unconditional love they long for is unattainable to them unless they realize the nature of reality and upgrade their self-identity. Any love they experience will already be conditional, conditioned by the imagined fundamental separation built into their relative self-identity. Some of the attempts to transfer unconditional love onto the relative realm are heartbreakingly touching enough to deserve all of the lifelong love it so desperately yearns for. Sadly, the nature of reality isn't open to bargaining. Whatever the aspiring unconditional lovers do to keep the flame of love alive, will fall short. That course in tantric sex cannot stop the fire of love

from extinguishing. Mutual respect, patience and the rest of it are all excellent assets, but they are more about making sure the explosive fire of love fades into friendship or a functioning family unit, and not into a balance of terror or an all-out dirty war of attrition.

The relative self knows that unconditional love is real. We can't explain it, but in our heart of hearts we are more certain of this than we are that we are real—which is, of course, a correct observation. But we still haven't seen through the limitations built into our relative self-identity. The solution to our problem therefore appears to be found in connecting our relative self with a *different* self than the present significant other, currently lying all the way over there on the other fringe of the bed. As long as we remain trapped within our relative self-identity it seems logical that the only solution to the mystery of love would be to introduce a different significant other to the play. We just haven't found Mr. or Mrs. Right yet—that must be what separates us from experiencing the unconditional love we know is real.

Even though the flow of love between relative self-identities sooner or later always grinds to a halt, we keep calling out to those left on shore. They too must enter the sea of twosomeness. "It's not c-c-c-old," we assure them through lips of purple. This stubborn belief in love comes from that subtle memory we just can't seem to shake, the memory of the unconditional love that our absolute Self *is*. A memory which is rekindled by those moments where two relative selves yin and yang complemented each other and thus received, however fleetingly, a taste of oneness. However, even a utopian moment of unconditional completeness between two people fails to deliver on the romantic promise of everlastingness. Romeo still must die.

Having played the devil's advocate I would like to urge romantic readers to hang on a second before they chuck this book into the fireplace. Because on the other side of a transdual upgrade, even the ideal of *till death do us part* may finally come true. While stuck in a relative understanding of self, there's no two ways around it. Romeo must die, and hastily so. Lethal poison must be downed while love is still fresh.

Some years back, before I had realized the nature of reality, I remember feeling a painful pang to the heart when a woman I used to know uttered the words: "Nobody believes in love anymore." It hurt because I realized this woman had captured into one sentence the full gospel of the nihilist God we all fall over ourselves to worship. And it hurt because I didn't have a comeback. I had myself lost my belief in love—I had become faithless.

But with the transdual shift, my faith resuscitated. I now once more share the stupid dream of everlasting twosome love held by every romantic fool out there. Not that such a connection is the *only* way to fulfill a loving relationship, but at least I now think it is a viable option. However, I should point out that while everything I have talked about in this book so far represents aspects of the nature of reality that are fully accessible to anyone willing to open their own eyes and heart, twosome love is different. As the term implies, it requires two, and neither you nor I can realize this particular dream on our own. So when it comes to my faith in twosome love till death do us part, I don't *know*—but I do believe.

I believe, because a transdual everlasting twosomeness is a fully conscious affair between people who are no longer slaves to the destructive tyranny based on fear and desire that wrecks such havoc on all relationships between two relative

selves. An upgraded self doesn't carry subconscious wishes to control an imagined world of foreign objects—partner included.

I also believe because of a very interesting aspect to Transduality. One of the many insights that are revealed after a transdual shift is that the countless objects are one—all the bits and pieces parts of a seamless whole. And this insight carries with it another revelation, namely that the whole is equally present in all the bits and pieces. In relation to a love affair between two people, this means that you may find the inner and outer beauty of all that is, present in just one woman or just one man. As the poem by William Blake goes: *To see the world in a grain of sand [...] eternity in an hour.* The full beauty of the universe can be found right there, in the person lying by your side. And you carry the same potential to represent everything good, true and beautiful to him or her. Two souls, complete in themselves, not looking for the missing piece to complete their relative self, but rather entering consciously into twosomeness in order to shine that little bit brighter together. A twosomeness that sustained over time can help the participants penetrate forever deeper into this infinite moment both lovers know that they are.

TL;DR of this chapter: The relative self seeks happiness. The absolute Self *is* happiness. The relative self seeks completion. The absolute self *is* everything. The relative self seeks longevity. The absolute Self lives forever. The relative self yearns for unconditional love. The absolute Self *is* unconditional love.

The Game Changer

Everybody knows what's going on with the world.

I don't even know what's going on in myself.

—Matt Johnson

The game of two

Mystical spirituality is often seen as being otherworldly—unconcerned with the realities of this world. Many spiritual folks will react to these accusations in the same manner Democrats react to accusations of being self-righteous or Republicans of being reactionary—with blanket denial. However, much of mystical spirituality does indeed think that the real action is to be found in an ultimate entity such as the Witness or a source that is somehow separate from and superior to the nitty-gritty of this dualistic, messy world. The world is often seen as some kind of dualistic illusion, ultimately unreal and therefore not worthy of our full attention.

Transduality doesn't engage in such delusion. In the last chapter we saw how Transduality affects the individuated relative self, but self-identity is also interlocked with all aspects of how our shared collective world unfolds. The world may indeed be illusory. But it's not illusory as in unreal—it's *illusory* as in the true meaning of that word: *an illusion is a false mental image produced by misinterpretation of things that*

actually exist. The world exists. But in order to make it a better place we will have to disillusion ourselves and see it for what it really is.

Let's begin with a look at ecology. In 2014 *The Earth Overshoot Day* fell on August 19th. This marks the date our ecological footprint is claimed to exceed our planet's annual budget—the point at which humanity's resource consumption outgrows the Earth's capacity to regenerate those resources that year. Back in 2000 this day fell on November 1st, so the trajectory is not a good one. How is this linked to Transduality and self-identity? Well, in numerous ways, of which we will touch upon a few.

The most obvious connection is that once you identify as the moment and not merely *in* it, it becomes self-evident that one should take care of one's surroundings. The world becomes our second skin. Personally I'm still very much of a work in progress when it comes to looking after this second skin—a progress that will last as long as I do. But I'm moving in the right direction, and have definitively improved on the guy who identified exclusively *in* the moment and not as it.

Further, the relative self-identity thinking itself fundamentally separate from the rest of the moment will feel the need to control what it perceives to be foreign objects "out there." An effective way of gaining such an imagined control is to own or consume as many objects as possible. We can see this play out on a personal level in our own lives. When we are at complete peace with ourselves and the world, there is no craving. When we are unbalanced, on the other hand... In the long run the relative self thinking itself absolute is not a sustainable illusion.

Then there is this: Growth is a natural evolutionary impulse. However, once we have reduced reality to a strictly material event, this originally healthy impulse will be

exclusively channelled towards the only accepted form of growth, namely the materialistic. Spiritual or inner growth is deemed not “real”, as it cannot be properly measured. This is a misconception that fires bullet holes through human hearts, and the environment gets caught in the crossfire.

A final driver behind excess consumption and ecological destruction is to be found in the need for relative self-identities to position themselves in relation to other imagined cut off self-entities. One of the most obvious ways for a relative self to stay on top of other relative selves is to own and consume more objects than the perceived opposition. Which reminds me of a saying credited to the actress Lily Tomlin: Even if you win the rat race—you’re still a rat.

I've had the privilege of traveling all over the world, meeting lots of highly intelligent, sensible and caring people from all walks of life, of different ethnicities, financial standings and spiritual and cultural backgrounds on the way. Many of them have in different ways devoted parts of their lives to fighting the good fight, trying to better the world. Among them rank some of the people I most admire in this life. Nearly all of these amazing people seem to share some basic ideas on how they wish the world to evolve. They want to see societies that are less geared towards shallow materialism with its focus on a narcissist form of faux individuality, outer growth, and the environmental destruction that follows suit—and more towards societies focusing on community, inner growth and a sustainable planet.

These visions are to some extent shared by most people around the globe, not only by alternative idealists but by those in the mainstream too. And yet, the world seems to move steadily in the opposite direction. How can this be? Transduality can help explain this conundrum through the unmasking of a self-contradictory delusion

that severely undermines all current efforts to bring about positive change in the world. Not only related to ecological issues but on all fronts of the good fight. In order to unmask this delusion I will share with you a silly little game.

The game needs two contestants. Each of whom gets to say one or two numbers. It starts with one of the contestant saying, "1," or "1, 2." The opposite player will then put one or two numbers on top of where the first contestant left off. If the first player says, "1, 2," the other may say just "3," or she may say "3, 4." Whoever lands on the number 20 wins the game. Simples, don't you think?

This game has a secret, and only one of the contestants is aware of this secret. This player will by apparent magic always land on the number 20. After a few losing rounds the uninitiated contestant will realize that in order to land on the elusive 20, he will first need to control the number 17. From there, he realizes, he will cruise to victory. Victory, because whoever says, "17" leaves the other with the option of saying "18" or "18, 19." Which again allows him or her to put "19, 20" on top of "18," or just "20," on top of "19." Either way, the game is won.

When the uninitiated contestant discovers the secret that securing 17 will guarantee him lockdown of 20, he becomes convinced that he has unlocked the secret code of the game. Assured of the impending victory he demands a rematch.

"1-2!" At this point our friend is virtually spitting out the numbers. "3," the opposition calmly responds. "4!" At this point his optimism is accompanied by the lighting up of a victory cigar. "5-6," runs the still stoic response. "7!!" His voice cracks up, more from impatience than fear of losing. "8" is the calm reply. This is one of the many ways in which the game may play itself out. Our friend's "9-10" is met with an "11", his "12-13" with a "14". Our uninitiated friend holds his breath before proclaiming

a self-assured “15...” But doubt creeps into his mind. He puts a half-hearted and fully stuttered, “16” on top of his 15. Before his cigar has completed its fall from mouth to flammable pants, the opposite player slams the devastating: “17” in his face.

Our once so optimistic friend is shattered. “18...?” Is there still a microscopic chance? We are now witnessing the phase where man easily gives up on all he has ever learnt in the faint hope for a miracle. “19,” replies the hate object previously known as the opposition. But she isn’t done just yet. She lets her 19 hang in the air for a while, before applying the deathblow: “20!”

By now you may have figured out that you’ll have to land on the number 14 to secure 17, 11 in order to secure 14, 8 to secure 11, 5 to secure 8, and finally 2 in order to make sure you can put number 5 in your pocket. However, I promise this is a much harder process to get the hang of when you are fully involved in the game.

Beyond the ability to turn previously well-functioning acquaintances into rabid primates, this game can be useful in understanding why collective developments in the world seem to run contrary to the shared wishes of the majority including many of the most intelligent, sensible and caring people on Earth.

What did we learn from this silly little game? We learnt that 2 is the principle number, the secret, and the corner stone. If the right corner stone isn’t in place, the whole house of cards is built on sand. What constitutes this principle number in the way we shape our collective world? Self-identity does. All our actions can be traced back to how we on the most fundamental level perceive our self and the world that surrounds it.

In the process of trying to better the world we appear to have a vast array of possibilities available. But even though our options may seem infinite they really are

not. The dice of life isn't as unpredictable as we like to think. Our 5's, our 8's, our 11's, 14's, 17's and our 20's are all derived from our principal principle, our 2. You could call it an invisible hand. But this is not the hand of the nature of reality. It is the gravitational law of the principle number—and that number is currently occupied by a mistaken and incomplete version of self-identity.

While number 2 represents our self-identity, our number 5 may represent the wider group we identify that relative self with, such as our tribe, our compatriots, or people who share our interests. Number 8 may signify political ideals such as freedom, equality, fraternity, or ecological sustainability. A certain person may at number 8 fight for freedom or ecological sustainability for the community her relative self identifies with. As we get to numbers 11, 14 and 17 we move through the more hands-on choices and actions that finally lead us to the collective world as it plays out, our number 20.

Speaking in dyscalculic, we can let an image of a forest represent our shared world. The leaves of the trees that make up the forest are easily affected by the changing seasons. The branches are more solid, but they too are shaped by the wind and the weather. And when the branches sway, so do the leaves. The trunks are even more solid, but the trunks too can be shaken by a storm, and when that happens, the branches and the leaves shake with them. Furthermore, neither trunk nor branch or leaf may liberate itself from the root and still remain part of the tree. But even the root can be uprooted. However, behind every tree in the forest, determining the nature of its leaves, branches, trunk and root, lies a seed, and that seed is the self-identity. If we don't inspect the seed, our options when trying to improve the forest inevitably become limited.

Nearly all of us navigate the world from a seed or a principal number that entails some kind of separate entity existing within the wider scope of this moment. More specifically the overwhelming majority of us have more or less unconsciously accepted a story that says absolutely everything—our relative self included—can be reduced to atomic or sub-atomic building blocks. This is the crux of reductionist materialism, and to most of us a variation on this materialism makes up our most basic self-identity.

This means that nearly all politicians, activists and change-makers subscribe to a reductionist materialist principle number. Not that they necessarily walk around contemplating to themselves how they are fundamentally isolated entities built from absolutely separate building blocks. One of the shortcomings to a relative self-identity is exactly the lack of genuine self-awareness.

Either way, a variation on the theme of relative self-identity remains the all-important seed of nearly all the trees in the forest called our collective world. Whether Republican or Democrat, mainstream or alternative, almost all of us subscribe to an incomplete self-identity. More idealistic players will sport somewhat more charitable versions of the same principle number, but underneath the make-up... the same materialistic principal principle.

The more intelligent, sensible and caring people fighting the good fight may win some battles, but they appear to be losing the war. So who is winning it? On the surface of things, the cruder reductionist materialists are. Why are these people equipped with a less complete understanding of self and others—and therefore less in tune with the transdual nature of reality—winning the war while the more

intelligent, sensible people are losing it? Surely, in the long run, intelligence should trump ignorance and sensitivity and care should trump selfishness?

They are winning because their worldview is more in tune with the reigning principle number that both sides unconsciously have subscribed to. As long as their self-identity remains dualistic, the women and men fighting the good fight keep undermining themselves. We may claim to support a more idealistic vision of what the world should and could look like than that held by the cruder materialists—but if we accept and share the materialists' fundamental view of the relative self as an absolutely separate entity, we become the brilliant ally of our own gravediggers.

When saying that the cruder materialists are winning the war that is of course a truth with some severe modifications. As long as we fail to upgrade our self-identity both sides are ultimately losing. Every won battle a pyrrhic victory. Both sides are passengers on the same ship of fools pulled off course by a current of ignorance—prisoners on a rudderless voyage prone for an unpleasant iceberg encounter.

To bring about real change we need to change the principle number from the current state of identifying *in* the moment and start identifying *as* it. This moment in its entirety must become our new corner stone. The relative self will then become the new number 5, our basic group affiliation our new number 8, and so forth. This is a revolution that starts from number 2, from the bottom up as it were. From this new principle number there will emanate a new invisible hand, one that operates aligned with the nature of reality and not in constant opposition to it. This is an invisible hand that will steer our collective ship back on course. A course where all the amazing souls fighting the good fight on behalf of the rest of us will finally and deservedly feel

the wind in their sails—no longer held back by the headwind caused by tilting at windmills.

As I mentioned earlier, some of the people who are at the front lines fighting the good fight are amongst the people I most admire in this world. When a child goes hungry it is of no use to that child to have someone tell it to identity as the moment and not merely *in* it. It needs for some beautiful soul to give it food and for others to investigate and improve on the local, regional and global structures that led to the child going hungry in the first place. This is the all-important work carried out by some of the people fighting the good fight. But beyond continuing the admirable efforts they are already engaged in, a closer look must be devoted to what constitutes the principle number in their own self-identity. When that happens I believe the intelligence, compassion and positive energy that these wonderful people embody will have immense transformational power. How far will this power be able to take us? Once all this creative energy is unleashed I don't see a limit to how far.

How soon might these changes happen? On the absolute level that question is best answered with the title of a song by British band The Smiths: *How soon is now?* On the relative level? In the 1970s a journalist posed a question to philosopher and founder of deep ecology, Arne Næss: “Are you an optimist regarding the environment on behalf of the 21st century?” “I am definitely an optimist regarding the environment on behalf of the 22nd century”, said Næss. The journalist corrected him, pointing out that Næss surely meant to say the 21st century. “No, I meant the 22nd”, Næss replied.

I feel the same way about seeing a transdual transformation of the world, not only ecologically speaking. When we first take on a transdual self-identity it is tempting to think the world is transforming with us. After all, what we are is what we

see, and after such a shift we're suddenly seeing all sorts of signs of a collective upgrade all around us. However, it's important not to conflate the individuated personality with the collective. Many of the signs observed aren't new on the scene at all, but rather a continuation of an evolution that was previously hidden from the newly upgraded self-identity. Real change takes time, but not necessarily *that* much time. Today's global village was unthinkable a century or two ago. I hope that my granddaughter's grandchildren will attend schools where the pupils aren't indoctrinated with the gospel of separation. That future leaders will base their decisions on the awareness that they exist *as* this moment, not merely *in* it. Leaders of a world where most of the local, regional and global imbalances—be it ecological, financial or otherwise—that come with the separation territory have at least begun to be evened out.

You may of course say I'm a dreamer, but it doesn't feel like I'm dreaming when I say we exist *as* the moment and not merely *in* it. The real dreaming is to imagine a fundamental separation that has absolutely nothing to back it up beyond the thought that says that *I am absolutely separate*—a thought that itself has no root. Identifying with such a leaf-like mental construction is the real dreaming. To observe the nature of reality and, based upon that observation, open our eyes and admit that the separation maybe wasn't so absolute after all isn't dreaming—it feels more like waking up.

To the extent I *am* a dreamer I'm definitely not the only one. And even if transdualists hardly make up the majority and maybe never will, I find the prominent late theologian Paul Tillich's take on the historical epoch known as the Renaissance very interesting. This period took place from the 14th to the 17th century, and its influence shapes nearly all facets of the collective world we live in today. The

interesting part is that according to Tillich this movement merely had one thousand active contributors. There are of course more humans around nowadays so it would take larger numbers to make an impact, but imagine what a difference it could make if ten thousand people realized they exist as the moment and not merely *in* it. A hundred thousand? A million? Or maybe it won't have that much of an impact. Either way, the world isn't a fixed entity. Whether we want it to or not, the world changes with us.

The state of the world is in the end a direct function of our self-identity, a manifestation of our collective state of mind. Yet on an absolute level the nature of reality is always perfect as it is, and your realization of that nature doesn't hinge on the world evolving in a certain direction. However, once you do realize that you exist as this moment and not merely *in* it, there flows forth a natural impulse to align the world with that realization; to drop a transdual pebble into the pond of this world and just let it ripple.

Don't Seize It – Release It

Don't forget 'yer ass.

—Katinka Synnevaag

Oddness

My grandmother's name was Katinka. She was born September 21st, 1899. I entered this world the same date 73 years later. The root of the name Katinka is Greek and means *each of the two*. As good a transdual name as any.

In the first chapter I touched upon the odd meaning that my own name is cursed with in the English language. That curse hit me like a hammer here in Norway sometime during fifth grade, when my class received a new patch of English glossary to memorize. We had reached words starting with the letter O. First up was: *Observe*. I knew that one already. *Ocean* was next. Easy peasy. But then: *Odd!*? What was this? I was initially surprised to discover my name was a word in English, and then curious to find out its meaning in Norwegian. Maybe it meant something really cool! Or maybe it meant *pointed*, as I had heard was the Old Norse meaning of the word, and I knew that two percent of all English words have Norse origins. *Awkward*, *bleak*, *slaughter* and *die* are all among them.

No such luck, of course. The following day I sat with my nose one inch above my classroom desk as the teacher mercilessly moved down the list of today's glossary. "Observe in Norwegian is *iakutta*", she said. *Prepare fire*. "Ocean means *hav*", she continued. *Aim*. "Odd is *rar (weird)*" *Fire!* I still don't know how, but by some divine intervention I survived the ensuing rounds of scattergun laughter aimed in the general direction of my sunken head.

That was the English meaning of Odd. If my boy self had known the following story behind his name, he would maybe have felt a bit better in that classroom in fifth grade. And, he might have never entertained foolish ideas about seizing the nature of reality in order to become enlightened. A myth from Norwegian pre-Christian times gives *this* explanation as to how Odd became a name:

My younger self was onto something. Odd does indeed mean *pointed* in Old Norse. More specifically it points to the pointed head of an arrow. The myth tells us that arrowhead turned into a name due to a man who was an avid seeker of truth. One day this man asked the Norse gods to turn him into such an arrow's odd. The strongest man in the village was then ordered to release this arrow from his bow. The gods promised to not let the arrow stop until its odd hit the goal of ultimate truth. According to the myth, that arrow is still roaming the skies and will forever continue to do so. Ultimate truth can never be hit, caught or seized. Its very nature is impermanence—flux.

To a lot of seekers, I think Transduality offers one of the best maps available on the journey towards ultimate truth. Although it differs from many of the other maps—not least in that it is aware of its mapness—it is still just a map. Or, to avoid the map and territory-analogies, think of your absolute Self—this infinite moment—as

the ultimate, perfect computer hardware. It is perfect because whatever arises is simultaneously integrated into the hardware. Whatever occurs in this moment is simultaneously part of it—part of your Self.

Transduality is a new operating system designed to help us make better use of this perfect hardware. It represents a massive upgrade on the dualist core systems that preceded it. Contrary to its predecessors it doesn't contradict the nature of the hardware it is supposed to help us navigate. However, this upgrade is of no use whatsoever unless you and I, the users, put it to work.

We exist as this moment—not merely *in* it. This can be the most important password of our life. Or it can be just so many words. The equipment can only do so much. You and I will have to do the rest. We have the perfect hardware – this moment in its eternal infinity. We have the perfect OS—the understanding that we exist as the moment and not merely *in* it—to help us fully enjoy this magnificent hardware. But we have to actually log on and start surfing the endless waves of possibilities ourselves.

Katinka lived in the countryside outside of Bergen, Norway's second city. As a younger woman she had her very own way of wishing well to people leaving for the big city Bergen or beyond: "Safe travels," she quipped, before adding: "Don't forget 'yer ass!" That's a sound piece of advice right there. Not least for those of us journeying the spiritual path.

Reality is not about a theory about reality, no matter how poignant that theory might be. Reality is to smell the skin of your own forearm and take in a long-lost scent that you recognize from childhood summer days. To appreciate music and the sounds of nature so much more intensely, as the sounds ultimately are not outside of

you, but a sonic expression of your Self. To befriend and make use of the long neglected body. It is to see other people more accurately—peering directly into deeper layers of their essence and beauty—and let the interaction flow from there. To be curious and interested, and to face the unknown without bias. To dare to trust and to find the courage to be open, sincere and brave, transmitting that same courage to people you meet. It's about having relations—sexual and otherwise—that probe so much deeper.

This is reality. What an insightful theory on the nature of reality *can* give us is the security and the courage to live according to the truth the theory points towards: it can give us the courage to *be*. Transduality is a means to help us live reality more fully. If the message of Transduality remains an intellectual understanding it is of no use to any of us. The realization that we exist *as* the moment is the end of the beginning—not the beginning of the end.

You've been on a long journey. The journey in its entirety took place in your absolute Self—in this boundless moment. So you went and you saw. You rose, you fell, and you rose again. You wondered and you marveled. You cried a little and you laughed a lot. You loved and you were loved. It was a wonderful adventure, but you began to feel tired and started to long for home. But you were lost in your Self. That was the premise of the whole adventure. For the journey to have any meaning your relative self had to forget the absolute Self.

Now the time has come to wave goodbye to the old captain called the relative self, supposedly located on a fly-bridge deck located somewhere behind the eyes. You need not fear who will now be in charge of your voyage. A Tibetan saying tells us: *May you find in this life a teacher—enlightenment in this moment.* When I first

heard that saying I figured that my relative self should meet another relative self that would teach me. The latter part I took to be some mystical mumbo jumbo. Now I know better. To find enlightenment in this moment means exactly that: To realize that you exist as this moment. To find *in this life* a teacher means exactly that: Let your own life teach you. Not only the rose-tinted blissful parts of life, but those dripping with suffering too. Let the absolute Self teach your relative self. Appoint it the new captain of your ship as you now dive back into life, in order to love, to learn, to play and create. Only this time without thinking yourself the victim of circumstances—instead realizing that the separation between the seeker and the sought, between living and life itself, is false. The journey of seeking ends here—in this moment—exactly where it started. You are in the best of hands—your own.

In those hands, I leave you, beloved fellow manifestation of the Self we both are. Have a wonderful day, and remember: Don't seize it—release it!