

Introduction

This is all there is, although in a thousand different ways we spend our lives searching for something more.

And what is this?

Present sights, present sounds, present smells, present thoughts. Present memories of the past, present ideas of what the future may hold. Present desire for a permanent end to problems, for permanent pleasure, for permanent happiness. Present ideas of myself, my achievements and failures, my difficult life and all its problems. Present breathing, present beating of the heart, present gas bills piled up on the kitchen table, present miaowing of the cat, present screaming of children out in the street, present pain in the chest, present longing for something more than this, present feeling of frustration at just not getting it, present desire to be free from it all, forever.

Watch a child at play. For them, it seems, this life is a great game, a giant playground where everything fascinates, and there seems to be little desire to escape from life and all its problems, to move into some higher or more spiritual dimension. As adults, however, we seem to spend a lot of

time trying to escape from the play of life and all the suffering that being a person-in-the world inevitably entails. Drink, drugs, sex, money and meditation are common means of escape.

And, of course, there is much traditional and contemporary spirituality which is more than happy to cater to the same desire. However, in catering to this desire, the idea that there is, in fact, an individual who could escape from suffering in the first place, or indeed do anything at all, is inevitably reinforced.

In this book, the possibility is suggested that there is only ever the present appearance of life, with no individual at its core who could ever escape even if they wanted to. Indeed, the individual is merely another appearance in the play, not something that needs to be accepted or rejected, transcended or denied, but something that simply appears, along with all the other sights, sounds, smells, thoughts and feelings.

This message is so simple, so obvious. The individual (the seeker, the sufferer, the candlestick maker) simply appears as another part of the play of life. And with it may arise the desire to escape from life, but that too is merely another appearance, another part of the narrative.

And all of this is absolutely fine. None of it needs to be accepted or rejected, transcended or denied. Suffering is fine, seeking some sort of spiritual enlightenment or liberation is fine, precisely because there is nobody there in the first place. “A person at the centre of it all” is just another appearance, another belief, another part of the story.

But don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying that we should get rid of our beliefs. Beliefs are fine, and the need for the destruction or transcendence of beliefs would just be another belief anyway. And so, this book will not offer the individual – that is, you – any new beliefs, nor will it attempt to destroy any present ones. Nothing ever needs to be denied or rejected for liberation to be, because in this moment, as life plays out, there is always already liberation, and anything we do to achieve liberation is simply misguided, but nonetheless perfectly acceptable.

Already nobody is running this show, already nobody is suffering and already nobody longs to be free. There is simply the present appearance of it all. Simply this, and nothing more. It's so simple, so obvious.

The heart beats, and you are not doing it.

Breathing happens, and you are not doing it.

Sounds in the room happen, and you are not doing them.

Pain arises, and you are not causing it. Joy happens, and you have no choice. The sun rises and sets, flowers grow and wither and die, seasons change in the blink of an eye, and you are not in charge of this dream world. The play of opposites plays itself out, and there is an undetectable Silence that continuously embraces it all, allowing everything to arise exactly as it is.

And the entire world arises in this open space, in this vastness which is utterly free from separateness and solidity, but which embraces separateness and solidity like a mother embraces a newborn baby.

The secret is there in your heartbeat, in your breathing, in the sights and sounds and smells manifesting themselves exactly where you are, right now.

The secret is here. Do you see?

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And not even the recognition or intellectual understanding of any of the above is necessary for liberation, as so often we are told by the spiritual teachers. None of these words need to be

understood. There is nothing to “get”, nothing to transcend, nothing to be achieved. Lack of understanding, lack of “getting it”, lack of achievement: these are yet more present appearances in the play of life, no worse nor better than their opposites. And all opposites unravel in this.

Beyond belief or lack of it, beyond anything that words could ever state, beyond all beyonds, there is always this, now and forever.

About This Book

This book was written over a two year period, as the desperate search for an escape from life began to be seen through. The seeing-through was sometimes dramatic, sometimes subtle, and always hard to talk about without sounding like a complete self-contradiction.

Here are some points to bear in mind as you read.

- In this book, no methods are laid out, no Path to Self Realisation is set forth. There is no Seven Step Plan to Happiness, no Twenty Days To A More Enlightened You. If things were that easy, wouldn't the mind have ended its search by now?
- There is no logical progression in this book. Nothing follows on from anything else, and the text is riddled with paradoxes and contradictions. And this can be very frustrating for a mind hooked on logic, rationality and intellectual understanding. But as I will point out over and over again, this message is not to be understood on an intellectual level. The writing consistently points back to the simplest but most profound truth: This is all there is. This constant reminding of the utterly obvious will not be of any help to you, the individual, but as the message begins to

permeate (for want of a better word) and as the apparent existence of the separate individual is seen through, an ease and an equanimity may be revealed. And this ease and equanimity, well, it's your natural state.

- This book will not help you, if you are looking to be helped. But perhaps, in spite of this book, there will be a seeing through of the need to be helped. Perhaps there will be a seeing through of the search for spiritual enlightenment, the search for Nirvana, the search for peace, the search for liberation and awakening. Or perhaps there won't be any seeing through of the search, and that is fine too. Everything that happens is absolutely appropriate, because in the final analysis, you are not in control of any of it. But more of that later.

- Read this book slowly. Its words are meditations, not ideas for you to chew on intellectually. Let the words penetrate, percolate, permeate. Take your time. Enjoy the spaces between the words. Pause occasionally to look around you. If you find yourself rushing through the book, ask yourself why. What do you want from it? What do you hope to get? What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for something to click, for some sort of intellectual understanding? For some sort of spiritual enlightenment to descend upon you in a flash of lightning?

Virtually every sentence in this book is pointing back to the same thing, a thing which isn't really a thing at all. And if you don't get it from the first page of the book, you won't get it at all. Because really there's nothing to get. But as long as there is the belief that there is something to get, there will appear to be something to get. Get it?

Yes, what we're talking about here is really as simple as doing the dishes, as obvious as the sound of the rain falling on the roof, as ordinary as going to the toilet. It's so simple, obvious and ordinary, in fact, that it's nearly always overlooked. And when this simplicity is seen, there can be much laughter.

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The three sections of this book represent three aspects of liberation. Part One reflects the utter simplicity and obviousness of liberation: it is this, here, now – no attainment necessary. Part Two contains expressions of the undeniable sense of freedom and release that may arise as the existence of the apparent individual is seen through. Part Three reflects the way in which liberation seemingly permeates the apparent life story of the individual. As seeking subsides, certain aspects of life are seen in new ways. It is not a rejection of the life story, but a seeing through of its apparent solidity. Additionally,

there are two sections of dialogues about the search for liberation, enlightenment, happiness, God, Nirvana, a bigger bank balance.

And now, on with the show!