

the life of |

Insight on the life 'you' think 'you' are living By Nathalie Strassburg



T a b l e o f C o n t e n t s

Something to Say

The Life 'You' Think 'You' are Living

The Experience of 'I'

The 'I's World of Beliefs

"Living 'I'"

The idea/non-idea of 'life of 'I'"

the life of I



S o m e t h i n g t o S a y



Foreword

'I' have been 'contemplating' the human existence for many years. 'I' have read countless books and filled my life with countless activities in order to try and understand the human psyche. This is what we call life. Many of you are doing the same thing, directly or indirectly. And some of the stuff out there is really interesting, right. The problem though is that no matter how much they help or how smart the ideas seem you are left right where you started, with even more things going on in your mind. The world you are living in is created by your mind. And is all based on the non-negotiable assumption that a non-physical identity (call it 'mind', 'me', 'I' 'self' 'soul' 'self-consciousness) actually exists. Life is life; the 'problems' are created when we insist that there is an operator that operates this body-mind system.

Some might say that this is just a theory. If you read it as a concept then yes it is a theory of non-theory. On a more experiential level though it is a practice. The understanding of the composition of the 'I' has been around forever. But people do not realize that contemplating it's varied meanings and mentally trying to understand it still leaves you in the same place. We know all this stuff, and yet we cannot see it for what it is.

The words in this book will appear as just words. They will be interpreted and understood by each according to their own mind. Initially the mind will use thoughts of thoughts to try and understand a concept with ideas and meanings. Know that there is nothing to understand; this book is only a concept if you choose to see it that way.

This book is not intended to replace anything you think you have or believe. Your experience depends on your own reason, on your own practical experience of it, and on your own insight. Do not 'believe' anything I have written here, question it, look at this experience, this meaning you call 'life', discover your own insight, and look at your own mind and the idea of the mind, your thoughts and no-thoughts, and your truths and non-truths.

Language is even more limited by thought than thought. Here I make an attempt at describing my process of insight, my practice in understanding the nature of things, to see them just as they are.

We are brought up in this life by learning concepts, ideas and adding meanings. In the dimensions of the mind these concepts themselves get concepts to the point that there is no reality and non-reality. The non-understanding of this understanding

is beyond the understanding of the mind. Thought is limited to thoughts, ideas, constructs, meanings and concepts.

For I looked everywhere for an answer, eventually concluding that there is only this reality. I learned not to be attached to all the meanings I had in my head. First the mind was shown that the stuff it considered negative was just ideas and not worth having. Then the mind could spend all its time filled with the stuff it considered good. Then there was the realization that these 'good' things were just as much a concept as the negative stuff. I promptly started spending my time replacing meanings of concepts with non-meanings of them.

Living in non-meaning seems rather meaningless and it will be experienced as such. Until of course there is the realization that it is meaningless because meaningless is in itself a concept of a concept. Anything and nothing and nothing about anything that the mind can think or not-think are still just thoughts. This multi-dimensional 'world' of thought is exactly that 'world of thought'. There is nothing to know or know or not to know to know. If you are thinking or not-thinking about it, you are still living in the dimensions of thoughts and non-thoughts. Stating the obvious is a concept, but living it is a practice.

If this doesn't make sense, you are trying to think about it, it is not suppose to make sense to the mind. It is not something to be understood or not to be understood.

The following pages tries to capture my experience of my last thoughts, until the thoughts realized the limitation of its thought of existence. To eventually discover that you can live in this reality without 'living the life of 'I''. Without living that which you want and not want, without wanting, needing, gasping, suffering, or running after your emotions and feelings.

Acknowledgements

Thank YOU.

The Life 'You' Think 'You' are Living



All of us have questions and non-questions inside of us. We have this sense of ourselves that we give meaning. We all have our own experiences and our own meanings of these experiences. No matter what I experienced there was always a sense of a hunger, a thirst for something.

Sometimes I paid attention to this and sometimes I ignored it, there were obviously more entertaining thoughts to spend my time with. But this hunger always came back. At some level we all have a hunger, a need for something. The words and meanings will change according to each person's mind, but the fundamental idea is still there. It is because of this internal need or hunger that I eventually filled my life with things I considered beautiful and nice. I found it in clothes, cars, foods, friends, jewelry, drinks, parties, gym, drugs and sex and whatever else. And this goes on and on...it was all about next weekend's party or tomorrow's drink after work, or going to dinner with that someone tonight or some show somewhere. And well... I asked myself, what now? In western society we are rather 'lucky' because there are so many things we can fill or physical and mental space with. I earned a nice salary, it could be better but it was ok. So I could spoil myself today by eating out or buying that jacket I saw in the store window. And then tomorrow.... But somehow it felt like this hunger never seemed to be satisfied. Why? Have you ever objectively wondered about it?

I came to realize that it was this constant search for happiness or what I thought happiness consisted of (or the experiences that I equate to happiness – no matter where or in what it is found). Deep down I was seeking the ultimate experience. Thinking that will be it, when I have this, ahh then...' that will be the total happiness or the lack thereof, it will be everlasting, then I will know, and in this knowing I will spend the rest of my days. But this sense of just knowing never comes, does it!

This 'problem of life' has been pondered over since the beginning. It has been given different labels and different meanings. We create the world we live in and then we create the idea of the world in it. But there have been people who have come to understand a solution to this 'problem'. It takes some serious thinking to see the problem as it is. Most people do not want to take that journey because it means that they have to let go of the things they think make them who they are (family, personality, country, language, belongings etc). Some people however do spend the time to think about it. Many come to see the problem and stop right there, thinking that you cannot escape this problem. They then sit down, accept this problem for what it is and continue living their lives with some sense of peace. In both cases there is some form of mental resolution.

My mental resolution came from first having everything I thought I wanted, and then not wanting everything I thought I wanted. Many people spend their lives looking for everything they want, buying it, getting it, sharing it, taking it etc. Due

to the nature of our world and the infinite things you can have most people spend their entire lives getting these things (physical, spiritual and mental).

Occasionally people renounce all these things or some of them in search for something else.

This is what I did. Eventually one day I sat down in one place, surrounded with very few things and started thinking...

Life consists out of experiences and the meaning we attach to them. The idea 'life' itself consists out of experiences and meanings we attach to it. Fundamentally life consists out of many different things and these are all mentally tied together by the idea of 'me', 'I' in each experience.

So how do we experience life? Through our senses, correct? Mouth (taste), body (skin - feel), eyes (see), nose (smell), ears (hear) and mind (thought). Lets look at these 6 inputs. When we call something an experience we are talking about aconsciousness.

In slow motion:

There is a sense contact (lets say you see a object)

Then there is a sensation of the contact in the body

The contact then becomes a feeling when it is registered (a flower is identified)

This feeling then becomes a thought

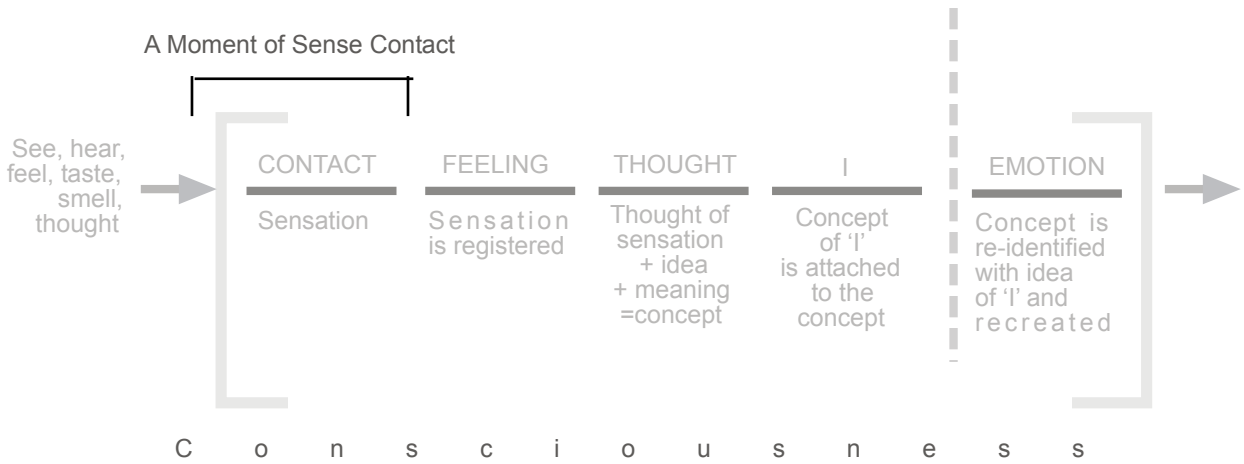
("oh it is a flower" + concept of flower is referenced (what it should look like to be considered a flower) +meaning of the concept is referenced (good smell, pretty etc.).

This thought then attaches the concept of 'I' (necessary for the body to function in this world) to the concept of the flower

("Oh I like flowers, they smell so good)

The concept is then re-identified with the 'I' and any related information is accessed and can come up (memories or any other ideas) and as they do they are experienced (recreated)

("Oh Peter sent me those beautiful red roses on my birthday last year....")



The non-physical identity we refer to as the mind is the consciousness that arises from the brain's processes. Even the highest level of thought, study and contemplation cannot describe consciousness in itself because it is out of consciousness that the ability to describe is born.

To look at 'consciousness' through ideas, it can be considered merely a part of nature or an element found in existence. To try and understand consciousness with ideas we assume that the human body has an operating system of some kind and this has given rise to the idea that 'I' exist.

This idea initially got my head tied in knot because we are continuously in and out of our experiences it is difficult to try and comprehend the actual idea of experiences.

The idea of the existence of a self is so fundamental to our nature (it is part of every thought and every experience and appears to be constant) that the idea of self-and-non-self cannot be understood by thought alone.

This is an approach to the idea:

This idea of the existence of self is fundamentally flawed because there is no continuous 'self' that actually exists. "Living in the present moment" is a more recent idea we have added to our vast collection. And even though it is limited by the meaning we have attached to it, it can be said that the present moment is the only thing that really exists. The present moment does not exist in a mental or

physical world. You will notice that in the present moment there is no 'I', unless you are thinking about being in the present moment, then you have attached 'I' to the concept of the present moment.

When you are not in the present moment you are living in a mentally constructed world based on what you had just experienced a second ago, or 10 years ago or the concept of what you will experience 2 minutes from now.

And this mentally constructed world does not really exist anywhere. So what literally does actually exist? Present moment + present moment + present moment + present moment... and so it goes on.

Throughout our lives we use our sense inputs to construct our 'life'. We do not think about it like that because it is happening all the time, like lighting it goes from one contact to the next, without us really being aware of it. This is the nature of consciousness that allows the mind make certain information unconscious, just like we are not consciously aware of our internal bodily functions. Unless the mind is trained to it cannot experience it like we experience our 'experiences'.

Each moment of sense contact is void of 'I'.

It takes some time to understand this idea. Through understanding and physical practice you will see this idea, and once you can do that, then the mind is free to look at things as they are.

My most cherished 'possessions' were my emotions, my experience, and the way I felt and the way I thought. So firstly I had to come to an understanding regarding my feelings and emotions. I made a distinction as follows.

For every sense + contact there was a sensation (just a feeling, no thought, no emotion) that followed. So there was a sensation, and then the awareness of that sensation created a feeling. For example when I hold this book there is a sensation on my skin – Full stop - that is the nature of the sense input. I am aware of this sensation and therefore I am conscious – full stop. Anything else beyond the mere sensation and awareness of it is a mental construct and does not physically exist as part of the sense – for example if the book feels heavy or the texture is smooth.

Consciousness is the ability (is the nature) of recognising sensations and to store them. Fundamentally the brain is only interested in three primary emotions: good, bad or neutral. These are the only emotions the mind needs in order to perform mundane tasks.

In the beginning it was challenging to see all these wonderful emotions and ideas of emotions on such a 'basic' level. Pay attention because we have come up with such a vast number of classifications for emotions that the mind does not want to see it like this.

And it is at this point where we enter the dimensionless dimension of thought. At this point we no longer see the natural process of it, we cannot because now we see only a world of ideas and concepts wrapped in meaning and filed in cabinets named 'I'.

Initially I looked at everything around me, everything has a name, everything has a meaning. I became aware of the distinctions we made. And this is called the world.

This world is actually a constantly changing process.

When the process is seen as just a process, when all the fluff and feathers have been removed then everything you think about as your life is gone.

So even though you might have all the money you ever wanted, a gorgeous girlfriend or boyfriend, a beautiful home and the car of your dreams you are still, every moment of every day, every week, every month, every year literally spending all your time seeking the ideas of pleasure / happiness / good sensations (or avoiding not good).

You might also have nothing, no money, no food, a small little shack in the middle of nowhere, no family or friend but you are still searching for what you have come to equate to good (and avoiding the not good). So you might watch the sun come up every morning or make sure that shack is cleaned.

Why? Because it is the nature of the mind to searching for that which it has come to accept as good and avoid that which holds the meaning of not good.

Is there the an ultimate everlasting feeling of good? If you have everything you want, will you still want more or will you be satisfied? Is there really such a thing as satisfaction? Is there really that great perfect job, or that perfect day or that great moment?

Let me explain a little more in detail. You have a nice car, good home, great boyfriend today in your 'life' which you = to good things, that make you happy. And yet in a few moments you might get up to go and get a snack to eat – now it is a function of the body to seek food so that the body-mind can survive – so your stomach might be growling or you might just want a snack because it gives you

a good feeling – it doesn't really matter how you see it at this stage – the point is that even though 'you' have all these things 'you' = to happiness, you still seek more. And there is nothing wrong with that, it is just the nature of the mind, how it is made to function, to seek that which produces the good feeling (or the idea of it).

So you get your snack, let's say it is some nuts, and you open the packet [as you are doing this concentrate only on the packet (clear your mind of any thoughts) and become present with the 'experience' of opening the packet, tearing or folding it open, each moment by moment. So now the packet is open and you take a nut (sensation + sensation + sensation + ...) and you put it in your mouth, taste, it produces a good feeling, and it slides down your throat, and as the food disappears so does the taste, and with it the feeling. In order to hold onto that feeling you have to think about the idea of nuts, if you don't think about it then there is no lasting feeling around the nuts. So when you think about it there is a 'good' feeling associated with the nuts which encourages you to take another one, and another and another. So eventually you are no longer just 'eating a nut' you are eating the idea of the idea of the idea of some form of energy.

As you are doing this forget about all the meanings you associate with eating, nuts, food, snacks etc. As you will see later it is completely irrelevant. Just observe your own experience of eating nuts. Notice that this experience is actually made up of billions of thoughts. These thoughts are moments of sense inputs. It all started with a sensation in your hands or mouth, the feeling of being consciousness of it, and in a split second "you are eating mixed walnuts" that... (the description of the experience is endless). So this world is eventually based on desires, emotions and the attachment (belief) in these emotions.

This reality is so subtle that you will initially skip over its significance. Firstly I had to realize that these desires are there for good /not-good and bad /not-bad. For example you bump your toe, and you move your foot away, avoiding the pain and thus you are seeing the good (no pain) feeling again. Look at everything, it is all around you, it is this world. So you get sick, and take some medicine to 'reduce the symptoms' or 'heal'. But what you are actually doing is seeking the good feeling (healthy or no headache for example) and avoiding the pain (not good) feeling of being sick. Spend some time thinking about this because the mind has thousands of different meanings around being sick that have been constructed over the years, take your experience down to the fundamental process.

This fundamental experience of life is not easy to notice. I had the opportunity to approach it in a very specific way. I literally forced 'myself' to sit still in one place. I did not allow myself to even blink or move a muscle.

When you sit completely still in one place you are faced with several 'problems'.

The most immediate 'problem' is pain, or the thought of pain. This is closely followed by more thoughts of the pain or other things. The concept sounds easy enough but the actual experience can seem impossible to endure.

Find a comfortable position to sit in. Make sure you cannot be disturbed. And just sit....

And then watch your mind. Watch the part of you that you think is you, this 'thing' that thinks, feels and tastes. See all the thoughts that are coming and going, and coming and going. No matter how significant the thought might seem do not spend time on any of them, just watch them come and go, if you hold onto an idea for a moment, just acknowledge it and then let it go. Focus your mind on nothing. No thoughts, no concentration. Even hold your breath if you want to. You will know you are in the present moment when there are no thoughts in the mind. This could take some practice. I eventually started ignoring the thoughts, focused on anything but the thoughts. It works well to focus on your breath.

When you are in the still present moment, start to notice everything, just focus, no emotion, no feelings, no thoughts, just a natural stillness. Then start to notice how everything changes, how everything comes and goes, how nothing in the world, in nature actually stands still, how nothing is continuous, how it changes moment by moment.

If appropriate for you, visualize the following in front of you: on the one side see a your mind, as an element, almost like a bundle of thoughts and images clinging to each other, constantly moving and changing.

And on the other side see your skeleton with muscle and skin that is composed of the sense inputs (mouth, ears, nose, skin, eyes, and a brain).

Now as you sit completely still notice that you are completely disassociated with your mind 'I' and your body. But there is still something that you are aware of. Without any thoughts there is only a sense. You can name it whatever you like.

It might feel like there is not much going on there but there is something. Let's call it the idling state of consciousness. This state is always there no matter what you are doing, thinking, eating, saying or being.

It is this sense of something that we believe is 'I'. And this 'I' is what we refer to as our personality with certain characteristics. When you observe any experience

try and observe it as an outsider, see how body (navigated by the mind) takes food, inserts it into the mouth, mind registers it and a good sensation (or a bad one or a neutral one), and the body chews, and swallows, and it disappears down the throat... and it starts again... thousands of inputs put together.

When you take these thousands of inputs and you multiply them with the thousands of inputs on previous input memory data then you end up with thoughts like "chocolate tastes good". So tomorrow you might suddenly want some chocolate. But that 'wanting chocolate' is literally a memory of a sense input and the thoughts about the sense input.

This is how each individual fills up their worlds mentally and physically. Now this can be anything, the mind does know what thoughts are held, the meaning attached to thoughts are just other thoughts.

Physical experiences are a little more difficult to disassociate yourself from because they are so fundamental to the experience of being you.

One day I realized, while eating, that I never 'just knew' when I had eaten enough. It was always something I had to think about, and usually the answer was no because what I was eating was a 'good experience'. The dimensions of consciousness evolves over time according to the inputs. So by this time eating had so many thoughts about connotations and meanings around it based on all the experiences and ideas I associated with the activity of consuming energy.

And consciousness moves so incredibly fast that I could not even notice the thoughts. I did not recognize the desire for the good stuff in everything I did. I thought that was just the way it was. And this goes for everything from movies, TV, drugs, exercise, being in nature, doing good, drinking water etc.

Human consciousness has evolved to such an extent that many people have come to notice the 'peace' they find in quiet, void, nothingness moments. Where the mind finds a resting place. Where the mind can slow down. This is temporary relief, just like everything else.

I eventually attached to this peaceful experience of nothingness by trying to 'experience' it everywhere and at any time. But no matter how much effort I put into it, I soon found myself experiencing my world of thought and emotions again. I tried to reason, I tried to discipline myself, afterwards talking to myself, thinking about the experience etc.

The first insight came in the resolution of one my biggest obstacles in life. Nobody else was really aware of it, because most of it took place in my head. My life was

filled with fear, and therefore I spent so many moments trying to avoid it. I was physically scared of anything unknown. Like being in a forest alone in the dark, the idea of not knowing who I was, the idea of losing my mind, the idea of maybe there is a god, or not. All of these ideas had this fear meaning attached to it. And because it had this meaning attached to it, I automatically experienced it as such. It was not until I could mentally separate mind and body from what I thought was 'me' that fear did not exist because there was no 'me' to hold onto the thoughts of fear. In other words I started to observe the thoughts as if they were not a part of me. In doing this I could more objectively take note of them.

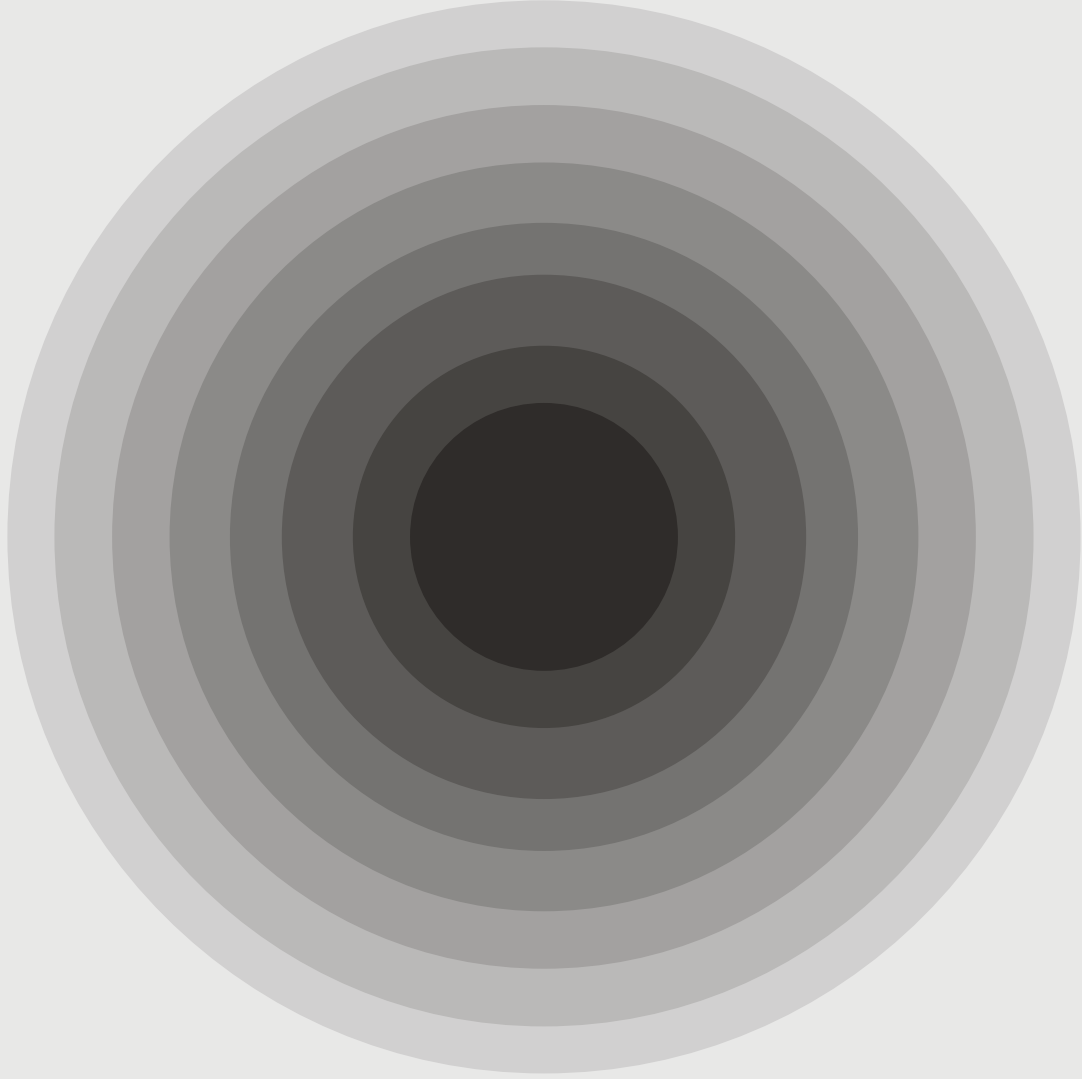
I led what I considered a happy life. I had convinced myself that everything was 'good' even the 'bad' stuff, because it all depended on perceptions right. And my mind was rather calm, but I could never sit still, in one place, in one job, in one country, always looking for more. There were goals to achieve even if they were not goals, I had a purpose, there was some meaning to living, there had to be.

Everything I experienced was experienced through thoughts. When someone said something or I had done something I had to physically tell myself 'it is OK' (the 3 most useful words you can ever say to yourself), 'it doesn't really matter', 'it's all good', 'there is always a positive intention', 'let it go', constantly having to train this mind to be calm and peaceful. Only because I had decided that a life lived peacefully was the life I wanted to live. No matter what type of life you choose or not-choose it takes mental effort to live.

The last few years I spent a lot of time contemplating my life, throwing around meanings, ideas, concepts and thoughts. I changed this and I changed that. It was an experience of sitting at the edge of a cliff. On the one side was the world I thought I knew but did not feel a part of, and on the other side it was just a black unknown.

So if you have this feeling that there is something else, hold onto that idea, think about it a lot. It might feel strange to think about it and you will come to explore the depths of the dimensions of the consciousness we have defined for ourselves. This is no spiritual hocus pocus, no magic, it is just looking at how it is, personal insight, realization, seeing it for what it is.

The Experience of 'I'



When the mind has attached a positive meaning to sensations it will keep seeking it, getting it, keep seeking it and getting it, and seeking it without end. Essentially the mind craves the ultimate life that is always happy and never unhappy.

When cravings (for food, love, attention, music, ideas, concepts, success, cars, being healthy, gym, drugs etc) are reinforced over and over again it leads to clinging – the mind literally tries to hold on to the source of this sensation, it wants to hold onto this experience of happiness to the extent that it believes there is someone that is holding onto the thought of that experience, that can hold onto that experience, that can actually experience that experience. This is the idea of an ‘ego’ that we have constructed.

So you [body-mind] wants the idea of [a pleasurable sensation] which it believes is found in something like chocolate [natural substance that has been modified and can now be defined by certain characteristics] that is believed to contain the concepts of [good, delicious, sexy, decadent] - then you are no longer consuming a substance because you are stimulating the mind with ideas.

This world of constructs and meanings is what gives rise to an ‘I, me, mine’ that is experiencing every sense contact. Of course there is no such thing as good or chocolate is only a concept we have chosen to define.

And if you try and understand this then the mind will experience confusion and will keep fighting it. The mind will assume you are just trying to introduce a new concept or a new idea to it. The mind only wants the experience; it is only interested in the meaning and not the reality. If the mind lets go of the experience then there is no ‘I’ to have the experience. Mind cannot understand that there is no self that can experiences all of these things.

Now intellectually you might think you understand this, and yes intellectually the mind can create another concept to understand it. But then this is just another concept or idea. And the words used here are not trying to introduce another idea. I am trying to explain that there is no idea to begin with. It is only an idea that there is something like an ‘idea’ or what we have come to understand as an idea. So this is not an intellectual philosophy or some theory, unless you turn it into one.

Then how should this be approached you might ask. If I suppose that there is only an idea of ‘I’ of ‘self’ then how do I let go of this idea?

Just sit still. Literally do not move, do nothing.

You can define the practice to a word like sitting, meditation, practice, mindfulness or being in the present moment, but describing it like this is beside the point.

When you sit still you are forced to be. Initially it might seem like just another practice. And probably a very frustrating one because all you will do is sit and think or try not to think. You will try to calm and train the mind, and you will try and concentrate in order to have some insight.

When I initially sat down I thought that I must be crazy. I could sit for a few minutes and then had to move again. Even if it was just a twitch, I just had to move, again and again. At some stage I could keep myself still for some length of time but then I experienced intense unbearable (or so I thought) pain. Eventually I thought that there had to be something about the pain, there had to be a point to sitting and experiencing the pain. It is not an easy thing to force the mind to sit still and endure the pain it was experiencing.

Eventually I endured pain I thought was humanly impossible. This pain became a permanent thing and I started limping around. I came to a conclusion that I could not 'handle the pain' for long because it is so intense to the mind. I tried to understand it, and thought that it had to be due to the nature of the mind that it had to focus on the most significant (intense) sense input. Even if the mind got distracted for a moment, it would always come back to the pain. This happens so fast that initially I could not experience anything else except this constant feeling of pain.

I got to a point where I thought that if I sat for one more second I would pass out – but the idea of determination can be extended. So I started to notice how the pain was never really the same. There were some moments where the pain disappeared, or it moved from one place to the next, or the sensation was a little different. The more time I spent observing the sensations I realized that the mind focused only on the sensation of the part it was focusing on, no matter which part or how big the part was. And then I started noticing that if I focused on another sense input like sight or taste, then the experience of pain would not be there, even if it were for just a split second.

What I initially experienced as seconds became longer. I would start filling the mind up with any other sense input so that I had to pay attention to in order to avoid the feeling of pain.

I understood this experience as the 'nature of the mind' that was inclined to focus on that sense input that was the 'most meaningful', positive or negative.

Eventually I experienced everything slowing down. These inputs (thoughts, feelings, sensation, images, sounds) became moment-by-moment inputs. Initially they were only seen as 'something other than the pain'. Every time I tried to think about the

experience (whether I thought I was thinking or not) I would be back experiencing the pain. The mind starts to see moments, how each moment is made up inputs – and nothing else – because there exists one moment with the sensation of pain, then a moment of the sounds of a motorbike rushing past, then a moment of a bird sound, and then maybe a moment of the sensation of pain again. I could only see this because there was this one constant sense of pain in my legs.

Now conceptually I was trying to think about what I was experiencing. This is a taught behavior even though it feels so natural. So all I started thinking about was the changing nature of everything. Initially I looked at the ‘things’ we find around us. Trees, grass, animals, me, thoughts, clouds, ants, the idea of everything, the idea of societies, the idea of worlds, the idea of the universe – thus the mind starts to realize that there is no such thing as a permanent anything. My mind has made them into permanent things. Nothing outside myself ever stands still. This made me wonder about the permanence of myself, of my being. I tried to theorize it and tried to understand it. I tried to take this experience I was having and put it into words or thoughts.

The frightening experience was when I started wondering about that which I thought was the idea of I. I started thinking about where my memories of me where. And if ‘I’ was not permanent, where would they go? Where would Nathalie go? How could I loose this sense of me, where will I go? What will happen to my parents, my sister, my life? It wasn’t bad, I liked it, was I going to disappear into thin air? In-between these thoughts I would experience the anxiety associated with these thoughts. And to top it all, I was trying to do all of this while experiencing inhumane levels of pain in my legs.

All I could come back to was my breath. It literally felt like I could not handle where I was going. I do not remember exactly how long I sat there or at what point I opened my eyes. But there I was, I did not disappear. Everything was still there, it did not feel like I was really there but the tree was still there, I still had legs, and a hand and... well I got up and walked away. Not sure and sure at the same time. It was very confusing. I was not sure what had happened. I could feel my body but then I wasn’t sure anymore. For the next few hours I just walked around and went about the daily activities. I did not feel happy, and I wasn’t sad either.

I started giving more attention to each of these moments of experiences. It felt like I was caught in a world of feeling something and then not feeling it because I was feeling it. I would eat for example or drink something. I can hear the sounds that let me know I am drinking something, and then there is a feeling that comes with it, and then because I am focusing on it then the feeling disappears. Then I would go onto something else. Even thoughts started having the same experience. I would think about getting tired, but as soon as I started focusing on the experience

or the thought, then it would disappear.

It is like showing your self that your 'experience of your mind' is made up of thousands of experiences. And when it sees that none of these experiences are permanent it can come to the realization that these experiences do not exist in nature as part of the human body-mind and it somehow lets go a little bit. I started forcing the mind to not-think in every experience. To slow everything down to sensation of touch, hearing, seeing, smelling, taste and thought. So essentially the meaning of these experiences started to change. Initially the sensations were there but there was no 'I', 'Nathalie' experiencing them. The information comes in but I do not allow myself to attach meaning to it. I just left it be.

Various philosophical realizations were made in this time. They were not understood as ideas as before, but I started to know these realizations. I started to know that we are part of nature; and that it is not there for us. We are not the center of all of this. Our civilizations have come and gone and they will again. Life is an illusion not because we make it up, but because the idea of 'life' is a concept. A mental illusion (formed by the mind) that does exist physically anywhere.

When the mind can see this it realizes it there is nothing (no idea) to hold onto – nothing to cling to. So the experiences of what he just said, what you do, what you didn't do, where you are going or where not, what you had or didn't, what just happened and what might happen become just experiences. So the experience of desire is just an experience. The experience cannot be fulfilled. The experience of happiness cannot be found and you cannot seek it. The experience of pain or bad things are just experiences, it is not really pain, or a bad things.

And then the mind becomes very happy and satisfied. It will think that this is the real happiness and really being content, because now there is nothing to worry about.

If you now shaking your head and going 'huh' then know that you have been reading this book as a book, as a collection of words with meanings, adding your ideas and incorporating or rejecting them as part of you – instead of a practice which is understood as experience, your own experience, not somebody else's that can be understood or studied.

Many people will read this to understand it as ideas never realizing that by understanding it you are making another concept out of it, making it into another idea, just like pain, fear, love or happiness. By seeing it you cannot see it.

Yes there is a nature of things. Nature just is, consciousness is part of nature. The mind thinks it is made to have thoughts, to process the information around it.

And because it believes this it mentally takes a hold everything. The mind clings to ideas like food, love, anger and anything. It creates meaning for these ideas and then clings to these meanings. Most significantly it clings to the meaning of meaningful and the meaning of self-existence. Thus clinging to its own meaning of its meaningful existence. This world of meanings creates the illusion of a stable experience of a self. In the minds reality it then realizes that the ideas of future, past and present are just made up of a sense of self + self + self +self + self. That there is no 1 continues self. Only the idea of a continues self exists.

So then I thought but how do I know I am not just fooling myself with these thoughts. I could find lots of scientific theories out there that could compliment what I am thinking and I could find others that would reject this.

In the same manner your 'I' will question what it is reading here. It will try and find ways to accept it, change it or reject it. This is a useless exercise because I am not trying to prove or disprove anything. Attempting to do this or thinking that it is possible to do this a concept in itself. Trying to find meanings and adding meaning to meaning for more meaning so that there is meaning to this meaning is rather complicated and would be useless here. Look around you, it is all just a world of meanings. You can change the meaning of any experience to a thousand different things, and at the end of the day you just have another meaning. It sounds very simplified but this is the way it is. There are even tools like Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) that teach you how you can change meanings around and thus change your experiences.

What is the meaning of life? Take the meaning out of it and you have... life! Initially when I thought about this it felt unreasonable to do this with life. There had to be a meaning, even if it was no-meaning it would still be a meaning right?

We have so much to live for. We have achieved so much. We are capable of so much. We have desires, and drives, we create empires and gods. Watch as your mind will fight the idea of [meaning of existence] and [no meaning of existence]. It is like we are driving towards something. We cannot go back or stop. The mind is compelled to go on and on. We are flying to the moon. We want to take over the universe. We want to pick the stars... but have you ever wondered why it is that the mind trembles at a mere thought. We can come up with a million theories of why but never know.

The mind hungers for permanent stability in concepts. Going from one to the next. I found stability in 'happiness' and did everything possible or indirectly to nurture this experience. But, we are part of nature, our nature is consciousness, stability does not exist in this nature, it is always uncertain, always changing, never the same, it is impermanent. When the mind literally sees this, it can start to let

go. If there is no existing, stable 'self' – then you cannot be thrown around by experiences, the mind stops the search for that ultimate everlasting happiness.

When the mind is only filled with the idea of observing itself, physically and mentally it realizes that it can let go of experiences. Everything becomes a sensation in the body. Pain, even though it is very persistent, is just a sensation. We have added the meaning and we have given it a name, we have created our 'experience' of it.

So as you sit still, and if you can get over the impulse to move and the mind slows down its thinking to finally stopping, to be there where it is, and it is concentrating on this experience of pain, and it notices how it is changing, and then how it is no longer a 'painful experience' the mind thinks it has been ignorant of itself all along. And it has been and it is.

There is an infinite amount of ways that reality can be seen. I had to physically and mentally slow down the experience of everything. So when my eye made contact with an object, a color or anything I had to notice how I started adding information about it. I did this with every sensation. Emotional experiences were then brought back to their foundations. I could see how every experience I had was to avoid pain (uncomfortable, bad, awkward) in order to seek the less painful (comfortable, happy, better, good situations, feelings).

Take a look for yourself. Consider the mosquito for example. Notice how you will slap it away, try to kill it, even wear long pants and use mosquito repellent just because you have this idea about a mosquito and want to avoid the possible uncomfortable situation of an itching experience.

You might not have made your bed up this morning before leaving or you switched the television on instead of sitting down with your child or cleaning the room – why? – Because it is your nature to avoid that which you consider to be uncomfortable and seek the 'better' situation like watching television, or sitting down for a few minutes, or washing the dishes instead of cleaning that room. And this might seem normal, and it is, there is absolutely nothing wrong with this. When the idea of meaning is created, and meaning is given to all ideas then all other ideas have to be based on meaning. This is the nature of the reality we have constructed.

So in essence nothing (even depression, happiness, sadness, pain, loneliness and anger) is really a 'issue' or 'problem' right. If you are unhappy because your boyfriend left you or someone took the last cookie you wanted it is only a problem because you insist that the experience is that.

All of these things, everything, is just made up of ideas and concepts. These moments of sense contact are generated by thought, ideas and language. So feelings only become 'emotional problems' because we insist that there is someone

continually experiencing a continuous stream of these ideas. The only thing keeping these experiences together is 'me', or the idea of an 'I' or 'me'.

To use another concept to explain this think of it this way. The human body is the hardware (so the brain is the memory storage etc) and the operating system and software is the mind. The operating system (and software) doesn't exist anywhere outside of the computer in the same form, and it 'runs' the hardware. Nature (consciousness) is the power source. Now the illusion is that we insist that the machine actually needs an 'operator' for it to work. Which it doesn't, this machine will run just fine without an 'operator'. Now you might say, well what is the purpose or meaning of the computer then – well this is exactly what we have done with life! We have confined it to meaning. We have limited our experiences by trying to confine it. Not theoretically but in reality. When you can step outside of this you can see it for what it is.

Natural existence (system idling) is turned into a mess when it tries to define or limit its data by trying to understand it. There is no software to uninstall and reinstall, it has a limited life, and no reset button, no guarantee and when it gets older it will be thrown out with the rest of them.

In your own mind now, imagine and step back from this 'organic machine' – you, and see it functioning. See how the operating system/software has made a mistake in thinking that it is an 'operator' ('I') that allows the power source to work that runs the chip to run the machine. Know that the machine is peaceful and just fine without an 'operator' ('I'). The machine will have a 'life' during which it will continue to run. And one day the machine will stop working because that is just the way it is, its makeup, its nature, just like everything else.

And now I can tell you that even that is still trying to add meaning or understanding to existence. It might seem a little basic for some but in order to literally see this you have to stop running the hundred programs you are trying to run at the same time. Only then can you see that you are not really running any of these. The illusion of this continuous experience is created because the processing power is so fast.

You are in the now when no programs are running, when it is quiet, in the neutral state, living, being – not in a fantasy world of illusions, meanings or processes.

Now I am not saying go and sit and idle for the rest of what you think is your life. No, but what I am saying is that by thinking it is so is limiting our existence and 'experience' of 'consciousness'.

First see everything you think you see for what it is. Become aware of your

hardware and software, see it clearly, understand it for what it is, and know its abilities and uses. Know that 'things' only become a 'problem' when the operating system thinks there is an operator actually experiencing all of this.

The mind does not know that it is functioning in the world it has created. It tries and understands itself with its own limited ideas of itself. It will think that 'nature' allows for the mind to think the way it does. That it is made to attach meaning to sensations so that it can remember and survive. It thinks it has to create an 'I'. And it does have to if it wants to experience this world of ideas and meanings. But it is this same attachment to this world it created that creates the 'I' that experiences exactly that which it is trying to get out of or relieve itself from.

When you start spending time with your body-mind, see its not-knowing. Almost like treating it like a little child, see it as a child, doing only what is naturally does. When it wanders around in thoughts, gently bring it back to the empty now. Reading this book is not the point, your mind has to physically 'experience this'.

First focus on your breathing like it is the only thing that exists. Then start to notice how feelings arise. Come to understand what gives rise to your thinking, your distractions, your mental restlessness and so on. Examine what the mind calls experience. Then concentrate only on a specific feeling, like being happy. Force the mind to be happy, then to be sad, and then to be still. As you experience thoughts and ideas, emotions and feelings, free the mind from anything that comes along, and free anything that comes along from the mind. Make sure that no feeling or emotion is held. See how everything then comes and goes. At first this might make you feel very unsatisfied with the 'world' and then slowly the mind will start letting go of the idea of itself, of an 'I'.

As I said before, this is not something to be intellectually understood, it is an experience, something you literally show yourself.

As my mind started releasing all of these things I noticed how major factors like fear slowly started fading away. In the beginning some of the emotions would come up but then they would just fade away. Fear would initially turn into awareness of that fear, but without the sweating, panic or anxiousness.

Later I started noticing how everything started changing. Nothing, not even drinking, eating, smoking, talking, laughing, standing, sitting, making, doing or anything could be done without the awareness of the attached experience or meaning.

Now and again the mind wants to think about concepts like future or past, and some thoughts will arise but then they just fade away. When I am in an environment where there is a lot of activity the mind can literally see itself getting stressed out.

The mind sees thoughts that it usually would hold onto and then the stressing fades into a bit of unsteadiness before fading away completely.

I started doing everything without prejudice or judgment. Decisions were made about the tasks at hand, when it is time to make decisions about the tasks (big or small), they are then done with clarity, objectively without seeking the better situation or avoiding the not-better – knowing that they are all just situations, just moments.

But the mind realized that it was still living some form of this reality, even if it felt completely different, it was still feeling and experiencing.

So does that leave me where I started? We all know this reality, or different versions of it, there are even un-created versions of it that can be created. And then we believe that this is the nature of mankind. That you cannot live outside of this reality, that you cannot escape it, not matter if you wanted to or not. Why? Because fundamentally I still held onto some form of a belief there was someone experiencing a reality.

This is a very serious matter. When you sit and think about it, when you consider the idea of no 'I' the mind wants to freak out. Because it thinks that death is on the other side of that fence. But once you can step through this, it is clear on the other side. And that is only the first step.

Imagine the mind is a sky. Clouds come, and it will rain, it will snow, the sun comes, or the moon and the stars, but the sky remains itself. The sky never holds onto the clouds that bring the rain, it just flows, it just comes and goes. And as a concept this works well. Mentally you can talk yourself through any experience and change the meaning so that you can have the experience you desire. When you mentally no longer have the attachments to the ideas it can no longer make an 'issue' out of something unless it wants to. But the idea of the experience of the issues are still there, thus the mind is not really free of the issues, it is merely attached to the no-issue idea of issues. When the mind is aware of sense contact 'your mind will' still give any sense contact attention. For example when you look at a [picture of a flower] you will see a 'flower' + "oh what a beautiful color" + "oh I like getting flowers on my birthday" + "I bet they smell really good", and you would want it and possibly go and pick it up. You have thus seen it as a meaningful object instead of just an object in nature that has a few round elements, different colors, an aroma and a soft texture. Even when I thought I did not, I realized that I did, just by having the thought or non-thought.

There are no things as we see them. Even your sense of 'me', 'I', 'my', 'mine', 'you' is an idea and it is the meaning of this idea that the mind is clinging to. It is the ideas that the mind has attached its life to. It has used ideas to give life its 'meaning'.

The only thing you 'really' 'have' in your life is meaning. Take everything 'you' have, and what 'you' do, and why 'you' do it, and when 'you' do it and for what reasons etc – it is all based on the meaning of those ideas. But this meaning is very important so it seems practically impossible to let go of it. That is why the mind holds on for 'dear' life. Because it thinks that it is all there is – the meaning you have given "I", your 'personality', everything about 'you' that makes you 'you'. You spend every second of your life on meaning. Look closely. And that is why the mind thinks it will disappear into nothing if there is no 'I', this personality you have been cultivating forever. The only thing that does disappear is meaning, and what is left, life, free to live, moment by moment.

As you are going about your daily life be especially aware of desires that arise. When you see, hear, feel, think, taste and smell and you think it is pretty, delicious, good or nice then know that you have some attraction to an object. Force your mind to see every object as it is; do not see the 'value' of it. For example see a gold ring as a round shaped object made from a metal, not something worth money, that makes you look good and means that you are rich. Do this with everything around you, especially those things that 'mean' something to you. Try it now, with the table, with the TV, with your drink, your hands etc. If you experience desire for someone think of a skeleton, muscles, blood and that which the body is made up of. I do not mean get disgusted by it, only seeing it for what is really is.

The same experience of desire goes for aversion, repulsion and dislikes. Notice it when you see, hear, feel, think, taste and smell, and especially towards ideas and thoughts. Replace these desires with the practice of kindness and compassion. See each human as they are, see each mind-body, and see that each one is living their own world of meanings and ideas. You can do this with yourself too.

Restlessness is probably one of the most common hindrances for people who want to stay in the present moment. So when you try and sit completely still for 2 minutes, but you need to move your legs here, and then change it again, then scratch your arm, and then you play with that pimple you remember you had, and mentally your mind is thinking "what am I reading" or "what are we having for dinner tonight" and "I have to remember to pickup my laundry – you might think this is normal (condition of the mind) but the mind is just restless.

Remember that the emotions that come up with each thought completely distract you because immediately you attach yourself to the emotion and all of a sudden you are 'unhappy' because this book is taking up your time or you get 'worried' about getting this done – the list is endless. It is here where you gently focus your eyes, breath in and out, watch your breath going in and out, and sit completely still, so that your mind is forced to focus on the breath. When it runs off to go and play, just gently bring it back to the here and now.

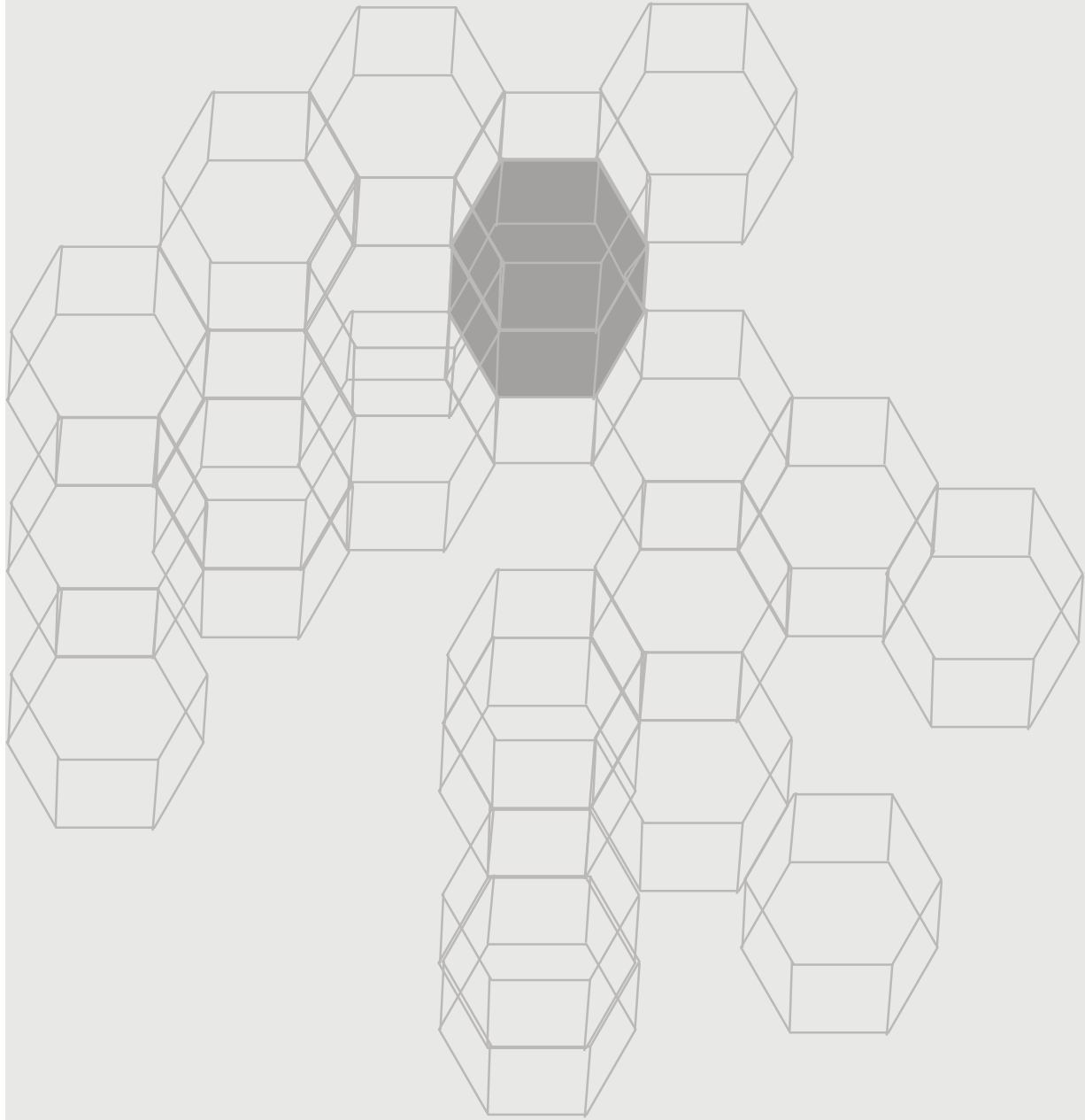
When I initially started practicing this it did not feel like a mother-child relationship. The initial feeling was terrifying. It was as if the mind had 'become' something. That it physically existed. It was frightening to explore the mind. Almost like it was this huge closet full of stuff, this deep dark space, with no end and no beginning. The mind truly thought it was this undefined, untrained wild beast that could never be calmed, or understood by anyone or anything.

This feeling however passes.

As you read this book you will also become filled with doubt, but these too will come to pass. If there is something you want to check out, make sure you get a satisfied answer for yourself.

Be careful not to replace one idea of 'self' with another 'self'. The mind does not exist as a concrete object; it is a sensory and information processing system that's ability has been mistaken for that which you now refer to as 'I'. This 'I' is what is thought of as the personality, navigated to such an extent that it believes in itself and any concept that originates from it to such an extent that it is experienced as ultimate reality.

The 'I's World of Beliefs



The possible concepts that can live in the mind are infinite. Beliefs are concepts that have been reinforced over time and have become an integral part of your experience of yourself and the world. Fundamentally 'belief' is a concept based on the concept that there is a belief that can be had.

When little attention is given to the workings of the mind these beliefs appear as things you just know. You might never have seen it or specifically experienced it but you know it is there. You might think that you cannot-not-believe. Beliefs, as with any other concept, theory or idea compel the existence of other truths. The mind cannot comprehend itself without them.

The most fundamental of these is of course the belief that there is a 'me', and 'I' or a self that experiences life, its past, future and present.

Beliefs (anything taken to be true without question) is needed in order to function in the world. From the mundane activities like using your hand to eat (belief that you can use that thing to bring something towards you so that it can be inserted into this thing) to the not-so-mundane.

Beliefs dictate everything else in your life and specify the meaning you will attach to experiences, people, ideas and symbols.

For the not-so-mundane part of life we add meaning through beliefs in concepts like religions, non-religions, spiritual, academic, scientific, mathematical or some or another form. These beliefs makeup the base of our understanding of our-selves, our environment and our non-mundane-decisions in life.

These beliefs, due to their nature, are considered to be philosophical matters that can be debated, or not, that are negotiable or not and that can be wrong or right or neither.

On close inspection however it will become clear that all of these are fundamentally the same. None of them can really be debated or be said to be wrong or right because they are all still ideas, concept or mental constructs. If you think that your beliefs are right or wrong or neither that can be debates or not then 'you' will always get 'your-self' caught up in the debates because it is your belief in yourself that conducts these philosophical debates in the first place. The fact that there is a need to debate comes from the 'I' that is attempting to prove its point of view so that the 'I' can 'feel secure about the life that it is living'.

To you the 'stuff' in this book will just become another set of ideas, or a belief, or non-belief, unless the mind is shown that "...all things are essentially empty; not born, not destroyed; not stained, not pure; without loss, without gain." - The Great

Prajna-Paramita Heart Sutra.

Science and Mathematics

Science and math is very useful in explaining certain concepts. However if you examine the processes involved in understanding the more subtle aspects of nature through science you get yourself caught up with your hands and legs tied. Nature is fundamentally elusive especially if we want to apply the same 'objective reality' we apply to science.

Science gives little attention to conscious experience. This is usually regarded as some phenomenon that need not be taken into consideration because its subjective nature does not meet the requirements of science. However if we look at something like meaning, which is so fundamental to our experience of reality, you will see that meaning has dimensions science cannot even dream about.

The only thing mathematics (or any related form) can tell you is more mathematics, even if it elaborates, or even tells you something you have never known before. The certainty or facts of math are thus still fundamentally based on a certainty or fact that is assumed to be true. Besides that it contains no information on any experiential subject matter. The only reason why it is still used is because it relies on the application of the fundamental propositions of mathematics. Mathematics is a vast and inventive conceptual structure that is a useful theoretical tool for scientific understanding. However, most of the time it is not seen this way.

Understanding the Mind

Psychology and Philosophy of the Mind

Theories of the mind, philosophical and psychological are found on the assumption that there are mental states based on a physical experience that can give rise to a distinct non-physical property.

One does not have to deny sensations, but by thinking about it and trying to understand 'it' we are obligated to create an idea ('mind') that is separate to the brain (physical processing system). We are then obligated to assume that it is this idea ('mind') that the essential part of our being and a part of all the conscious states.

All of these studies are thus based on an assumption that there is a non-physical property that exists somewhere in nature that can have these mental states based

on physical experiences. This non-physical property is only 'alive' as an idea, without the 'idea' of it, it does not exist. It is not found in nature and it cannot be experienced. If you think it does then you are thinking it into existence.

We have come to accept that it is ok for scientific theories to identify the physical property for something we have identified in the world, like water or DNA. Then the mind automatically thinks it can do the same with mind or consciousness.

Theories of mind or consciousness then use an agreed methodology to test its hypothesis of the concept. Consciousness or being conscious is defined by looking inward to see if there are states or the lack of them – the ability to look inward or being aware is thus defined as being consciousness or a form thereof.

The theories can then make a distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness. For example it is assumed that animals like mice are conscious (as opposed to unconscious or not awake) but that they are not self-conscious like humans are. They might still have states but they are not aware of them, because to be aware of them would require self-consciousness. It is the concept of self-consciousness that requires the concept of conscious states so that we can think about conscious states and have the ability to have these conscious states.

We are thus creating theories out of a concept that is used to describe the concept to see if we have correctly identified categories of concepts that our concept of 'self-conscious' concepted in the first place.

So is there nothing special about these states we are internally aware of? They are only special to the owner of the states. The only thing that makes them special to 'I' is that we have extraordinary concepts for them, which we can introspectively re-identify and recreate.

Religions

People talk of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Sikhism and the list goes on. Each one believes they are right, and they have the truth. We think they are all different because we speak from our feelings. The mind's ability to create these concepts makes them appear different. When your feelings are removed from your religion it becomes clear that the essential nature of all of them is the same. And then if you look closely at the essential nature of religions it becomes clear that there is no such thing as religion. Religion is a concept just like Islam or Christianity. They are ideas given to feelings, a set of beliefs and rituals.

Buddhadasa Bhikku came up with an excellent analogy to explain the concept of religion.

People would agree that you get different kinds of water. Filtered water, rainwater, spring water, seawater, lake water, fridge water, carbonated water, drinking water, dirty water and toilet water. The mind will insist that these are different but with a little knowledge we can know that when water is distilled a more pure form of water can be found in every type of water.

We thus know that the water component found in each of the different kinds of water are the same even if they initially appeared to be different. Religions also appear different because of the mind looks at the external forms like words, rituals, country, and beliefs.

And when we look really closely at the water component we can conclude that there is no such thing as water. There is only two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. There is no water or actually no 'water' to begin with. Only some elements, a combination of it, as it is found in nature.

With religion there is only a certain nature and we can call God, life, energy, truth, dharma, tao or whatever we like because the experience of it cannot be confined to a label.

All religions try and explain a concept of a reality that is beyond the material world. This reality usually remains beyond reach or understanding and can be approached in various different ways. Some of these ways include distinguishing the ego from the true self, understanding the nature of desire, becoming unattached or forgetting about preferences, not working for personal gain and letting go of thoughts by redirecting your attention, being devoted, being humble, invoking that reality or surrendering. And lastly this reality approaches you through grace or a teacher and it promises your transformation by dying and being reborn, seeing the light, experiencing union or freedom.

Your understanding of this reality is of course based on your understanding of the concept.

Approaching the reality by distinguishing the ego from the true self:

Hinduism (from the Abhinavagupta):

Which is the soul? The person here ... who is the light in the heart... This person (purusha) here in the heart is made of mind, is of the nature of light, is like a little grain of rice, is a grain of barley. This very one is ruler of everything, is lord of everything, governs this whole universe, whatsoever there is. (p. 68, quoting from the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad)

Buddhism (from the Sogyal Rinpoche):

Two people have been living in you all your life. One is the ego, garrulous, demanding, hysterical, calculating; the other is the hidden spiritual being, whose still voice of wisdom you have only rarely heard or attended to. ...The more you listen, the more guidance you will receive. If you follow the voice of your wise guide... and let the ego fall silent, you come to experience that presence of wisdom and joy and bliss that you really are. (p. 120-121).

Judaism (from the Gershom Scholem):

This uninterrupted communion, which is the goal of creation, was broken off at the time of Adam's sin when his lower will was parted from the divine will by his own free volition. It was then that his individuality, whose origin lay in his separation from God with its attendant proliferation of multiplicity, was born. (p. 153)

... Every man has the power to overcome this state of corruption... by means of his own innate powers and with the help of divine aid prior to and independently of the final redemption. (p. 154)

Christianity (from the Bible):

Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16).

That ye put off ... the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24).

forgotten the soul; Created to be a mocker of devils, instead I am captive of lusts...

In order to reach the summit of this high mount, (the soul) must have changed its garments (resulting in) a new understanding of God in God, the old human understanding being cast aside; and a new love of God in God, the will being now stripped of all its old desires and human pleasures, and the soul being brought into a new state of knowledge and profound delight, all other old images and forms of knowledge having been cast away, and all that belongs to the old man, which is the aptitude of the natural self, quelled, and the soul clothed with a new supernatural aptitude with respect to all its faculties. So that its operation, which before was human, has become Divine, which is that that is attained in the state of union, wherein the soul becomes naught else than an altar whereon God is adored in praise and love, and God alone is upon it ...
(Book 1, Chapter 5, Paragraph 7).

Islam (from 'Abd al-Kader):

Then God -- may He be exalted! -- said to me, "What are you?" I replied, "I am two things, according to two different relations. With respect to You, I am the Eternal, forever and ever. I am the necessary Being who epiphanizes himself. My necessity proceeds from the necessity of Your essence and my eternity from the eternity of Your knowledge and Your attributes. "With respect to me, I am pure non-being who has never breathed the perfume of existence, the adventitious being who remains nonexistent in his adventitiousness. I only possess being so long as I am present with You and for You. Left to myself and absent from You I am one who is not, even while he is (fa-ana mafqud mawjud)."
(Mawquif 30, pp. 77-78)

Paraphrased: Among the degrees of the universal Manifestation, each sentient creature typically experiences an illusory sense of autonomy. At the same time, with or without the creature's awareness, the creature subsists eternally as an "immutable prototype" in the divine Knowledge. (footnote 23, pp. 200-201).

And becoming unattached:

Hinduism (from The Upanishads):

The aspirant who is seeking the Lord must free himself from selfish attachments to people, money, and possessions. When his mind sheds every selfish desire, he becomes free from the duality of pleasure and pain and rules his senses. No more is he capable of ill will; no more is he subject to elation, for his senses come to rest in the Self.

(Paramahansa Up. 4, p. 246)

And from The Bhagavad Gita:

They are forever free who renounce all selfish desires and break away from the ego-cage of "I", "me", and "mine" to be united with the Lord. This is the supreme state. Attain to this, and pass from death to immortality.

(BG 2:71, p. 69)

Buddhism (from The Dhammapada):

Those ... who find delight in freedom from attachment in the renunciation of clinging, free from the inflow of thoughts, they are like shining lights, having reached final liberation in the world.

(89)

And from Bodhidharma:

The essence of the Way is detachment. And the goal of those who practice is freedom from appearances.

(p. 47)

Christianity (from the Bible):

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world -- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does -- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

(1 John 2:15-17)

From Teresa of Avila:

Oh, my sisters, what nothingness is all that we have given up, and all that we are doing, or can ever do, for a God Who is pleased to communicate Himself in this

way to a worm! If we have the hope of enjoying this blessing while we are still in this life, what are we doing about it and why are we waiting? What sufficient reason is there for delaying even a short time instead of seeking this Lord, as the Bride did, through streets and squares? Oh, what a mockery is everything in the world if it does not lead us and help us on the way towards this end, -- and would be even though all the worldly delights and riches and joys that we can imagine were to last for ever! For everything is cloying and degrading by comparison with these treasures, which we shall enjoy eternally. And even these are nothing by comparison with having for our own the Lord of all treasures and of Heaven and earth. (pp. 153-4, Sixth Mansions, Chapter 4, Paragraph 10)

From The Philokalia:

St. John of Karpathos, in Texts for the Monks in India, 37: To anyone among you who is oppressed by a sense of his worthlessness and inability to attain holiness, this is our message: if he attains dispassion he can see Jesus, not only in the future, but coming to him here and now with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).

Evagrius the Solitary, in On Prayer: If you long for prayer, renounce all to gain all.

("Philokalia (Vol. 1)", text 37, p. 60)

St. Diadochos of Photiki, in On Spiritual Knowledge, 57: He who dwells continually within his own heart is detached from the attractions of this world, for he lives in the Spirit and cannot know the desires of the flesh.

("Philokalia (Vol. 1)", p. 270)

Islam (from Rabi' al-Adawiyya):

May God steal from you
All that steals you from Him.
(Book's dedication page)

And from 'Abd al-Kader: And if you are patient -- certainly that (huwa) is better (khayr) for those who are capable of being patient. (Koran 16:126) Commentary: In this verse, Allah consoles his patient servants in their trials by announcing that He Himself is the substitute and the replacement of that which they have lost and which was pleasing to their natural dispositions. In effect, being patient consists in constraining the soul to accept that which is repugnant to it. The soul experiences an aversion for everything which is not in accord with its predisposition in the present instant, even if it knows that it will be beneficial for it later on... Allah has thus announced to those who patiently bear the loss of that which pleases them -- health, riches, greatness, security, possessions and children -- that "He"

[for this is the proper sense of the pronoun huwa rendered above as "that" in conformity with the way the verse is usually understood] is better (khayr) for them than that which they have lost; for they know that "He" [who is the Name of the supreme absolutely unconditioned Essence] is their inseparable reality and their necessary refuge, and that the pleasing things that they have lost were pure illusions...

He who has found Allah has lost nothing, and he who has lost Allah has found nothing.

(Mawqif 220, pp. 45-47)

Taoism (from The Hua Hu Ching):

The mystical techniques for achieving immortality are revealed only to those who have dissolved all ties to the gross worldly realm of duality, conflict, and dogma. As long as your shallow worldly ambitions exist, the door will not open. (60)

... the integral being is attached to nothing and can relate to everyone with an unstructured attitude. Because of this, her very existence benefits all things. (15)

By letting go of thoughts:

Buddhism (from Vasishtha):

Paraphrased: Even though the moon is one, when shining on agitated water it produces a multitude of reflections. Similarly ultimate reality is one, yet it appears to be many on account of the agitation caused by the thoughts. (p. 329)

And from The Dhammapada: Let go the past, let go the future, and let go what is in between, transcending the things of time. With your mind free in every direction, you will not return to birth and aging. (348)

And from Sogyal Rinpoche:

More and more, I have come to realize how thoughts and concepts are all that block us from always being...in the absolute... When the view is there, thoughts are seen for what they truly are: fleeting and transparent, and only relative... You do not cling to thoughts and emotions or reject them, but welcome them all within the vast embrace of Rigpa. (p. 164)

Judaism (from Daniel Matt):

Arouse yourself to contemplate, to focus thought, for God is the annihilation of all thoughts, uncontainable by any concept.
(p. 69)

As it says in Sefer Yetsirah, "If your mind races, return to the place," return to where you were before thought. Return to the site of oneness.
(p. 108)

Christianity (from Brother Lawrence):

At the beginning, I often passed my appointed time for prayer in rejecting wandering thoughts and falling back into them.
(pp. 13 - 14)

Useless thoughts spoil all ... we ought to reject them as soon as we perceive their irrelevance to the matter at hand, or to our salvation, and return to our communion with God.
(p. 12)

And from the Orthodox anthology: Evagrius Ponticus, "On Prayer 61," in the Philokalia: Prayer is the laying aside of thoughts.

St. Isaac the Syrian in the Sebastian Brock translation of Homily 64: True wisdom is gazing at God. Gazing at God is silence of the thoughts. Stillness of mind is tranquility which comes from discernment.

Islam (from Ahmad Ibn `Ata'Allah):

The realization of La ilaha illa'llah... is one of the states of the heart that can be neither expressed by the tongue nor thought out by the mind.
(p. 71)

Taoism (from Shui-ch'ing Tzu):

True emptiness exists when the mind is clear and all forms have disappeared. Externally, there are no objects. Internally, there is no mind. There is only emptiness. In this state even emptiness does not exist. In true emptiness there is no space, no desire, no will; there are no appearances, no thoughts. All realms of existence are dissolved. In absolute stillness there is no self and no other. There is only Earlier

Heaven in its undifferentiated whole.
(p. 69)

Other means of approaching this 'reality' is by understanding the nature of desire, forgetting about preferences, not working for personal gain, redirecting your attention, being devoted, being humble, invoking that 'reality' or surrendering.

I encourage you to explore the nature of religion even further. The reality is the same, it is only the words that are different. The tendency of the mind to attach to the meaning of the concepts based on its own understanding instead of that which is being communicated is what keeps us from knowing the reality. This reality that is 'beyond the material world' is indeed right here, it is just beyond the comprehension, understanding of thought, ideas and the physical attachment to the body. All these 'paths' will lead to the same reality; there is no other reality.

Spirituality

So there have been many people who experienced the concept of religion as very restricted. Many people thus opted for their own belief system based on their own interpretations and their value system.

This system can reject labels and leaves ample room for change, acceptance, re-organization, re-evaluation and other considerations. These belief systems are only limited by thought.

Many people, including myself, came to this point. I had my bookshelves stacked with books on the mind and soul, self-help guides, self-improvement and inspirational novels. I attended courses and workshops while spending free time writing about these thoughts. Some people go to gatherings or retreats to elaborate on their own thoughts.

There is no lasting effect or solution but only that which you believe is so because it uses the mind to try and understand.

So you read all these messages, it appears to have some truth to it but you just cannot get your head around it. And even if it says "stop using your head" you try even harder to think your way around it.

Stop thinking. Stop using your head.

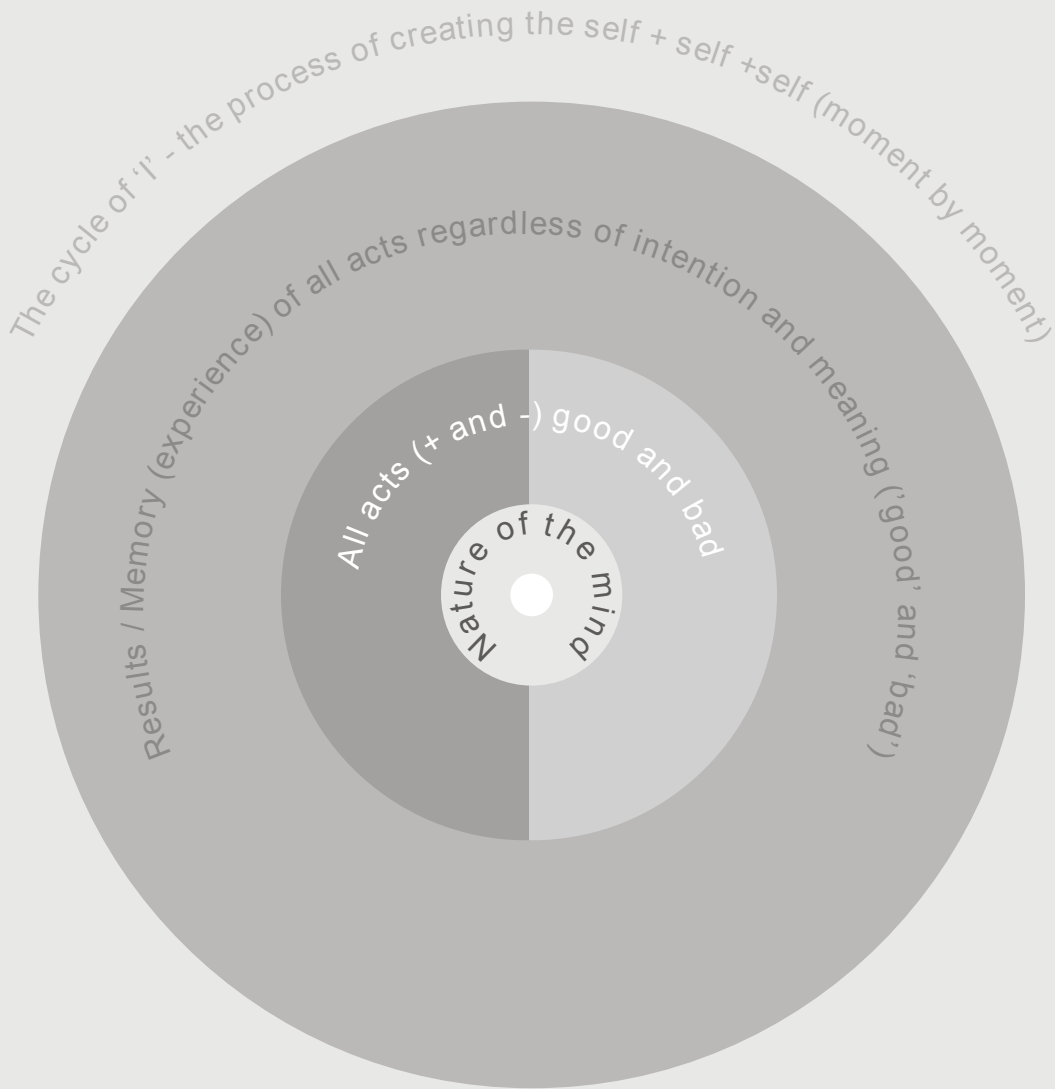
Stop using your head to do all these things you are doing. See that the reality you

are living in is a mental concept, a product of your thought. The reality constructed by your thought is not permanent and not substantial. It is an every-changing process that flows. Thought is ignorant, thought cannot know, in thinking you cannot know. When you let go of thoughts (ideas, concepts, meanings, things) there is nothing left to hold onto.

At first this will be a conscious effort. The mind will keep trying to replace a set of ideas for another, thoughts will continue to come and go, there will be times when the mind is still and you will know, until the next thought. Spend all your time with this matter; do not let it slide, until it becomes clear. And it will become clear. There is no guesswork, no questions, no ambiguity or concern. Be patient, and be strict, be courageous until there is no more opportunity for the mind to become caught up in itself. Outwardly you will still use language but it will just be language, without the meanings, without the attachments.

It is then that everything, every situation, every moment is life. At first a gift to learn about the workings of the mind. And then to stand in clarity.

Life without the thought of life is eternal life. Non-attachment is at the heart of science, religion, concepts, ideas, thoughts and nature. There is nothing else.



There is one way of knowing if you are living the 'life of I': If you are thinking about it then you are.

We think of ourselves as special, each group hold their own set of values whether it is a family group, single individual, social groups, a community, state, country or planet. We believe in wrong and right or nothing or some other belief, that there is reason, even a reason for everything, that there are truths or maybe just one, that there is such a thing as salvation, or an answer to something or everything. These are all blind beliefs in search of meaning.

Meaning in itself is only an idea, is only a thought. When the mind lets go of thoughts it can let go of the 'I'. Then there are no questions because no question ever existed.

There is no mind as a object, it is only a process brought together by the conditions of nature. The mind no longer has the feeling of being 'I', or being a self. There is no 'I', no question you seek to have answered, no satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the mind is calm, its hunger quenched.

I use these words we have developed to explain something that has nothing to do with these or any words or this book, or any idea, or anything.

There is nothing to get, nothing to give, nothing to have, nothing to do, nothing to be, no happiness, no sadness, no illness, no health, no suffering...nothing at all. Just everything as it is.

Everything is as it is, as it is, as it is, in each moment, as it is.

You literally create every moment of your reality by your thoughts. If you think 'happy' then in that moment you think it, that is what you are, and when that thought is gone so is that 'feeling of happy'. And with the next thought you think you are angry then that is what you are and what you will experience yourself as, until the next moment arises. It can be whatever you decide it to be, you already have all the references for every possible mental state you could want. The only reason why you experience some more than the others is because you hold onto those thoughts more. Thoughts are a process of the mind, they are not you, they are only mistaken for you. Whatever thought you have it will be so.

In every moment you, your idea of your 'I' is born. First the mind is calmed so that there is awareness of its own thoughts. Once the mind is calm and thoughts are seen clearly then the mind can see that it is attaching the idea of 'I' to each thought. When it sees this and realizes it is unnecessary and takes away the actual experience of life then it can stop attaching the 'I' to everything. There will be no clinging to

every thought. Thoughts can be just thoughts and life can be.

If we go about our daily lives with a busy mind it is restless, becomes tired, wonders off, dreams, clings to experiences and thoughts, becomes attached to the concept of a car, a chocolate, a lip and a body. The mind becomes exhausted with the attachments and the body experiences stress.

These restless minds use thought to create 'problems'. The mind gets caught up in political, geographical, ecological and philosophical concepts. Think about your own life for a moment. Think about how you think you live your life, what you say, how you describe yourself, how you feel, what you want, what you do not want, what you wish you had more of, or less, what you will start doing, what you want to give up, or try to improve.

These are the thoughts of an agitated mind, jumping from one thing to the next. This illusion is so 'real' that the mind cannot even grasp the idea that these things do not actually exist. The mind can become clouded with delusion. Full of worries and fears, gloomy and insecure about everything, grasping for air. And we insist on keeping it up.

Many people have started looking at alternative lifestyles because they see over-eating, love-deprivation, mental illnesses, nervous breakdowns and a world of physical ailments.

Until the mind is literally shown that these attachments are not real it will keep holding onto these 'realities'. When the mind lets go, every hunger, every thirst is quenched. The mind will know that there is nowhere to go. There are no answers to hunt after. What you do in your daily life is irrelevant to nature. When the mind is clear any job will be a success. You might think 'I have to pay the rent' but there will not be any emotional 'worry' feeling attached to it. The same goes for the 'good stuff'. When you sign a new client, or have the highest sales for the month, you will not attach to the money, success or your talents. They will just be.

This is not some far off reality or some airy-fairy idea, magical or mysterious that only experienced in some other lifetime. It is right here.

Just take some time – think about it – seriously contemplate, observe the mind. The words in this book are just words. The words are printed on paper to share with those minds that are a little caught up in the world they created for them-selves. Observe your own mind, discover your own truths, through your own insight because you are holding your resolution in your own hands.

The mind will understand the words in this book. But they are not to be understood,

not in any way. It cannot be understood by the mind. It can only be lived.

First the mind has to see that it's 'life' is based on ideas, feelings, emotions, experiences and meaning. Then the mind has to be shown that it is all just meaning.

Then the mind has to be shown that all meaning is based on either a negative or positive attachment. The mind has to see that it seeks the positive and avoids the negative in every situation, experience, in every aspect of its life. When the mind sees that it is all the same thing just with different meanings, then the mind is shown that meaning is an illusion in itself, it does not truly exist, it is a meaning in itself.

The mind is finally challenged by the illusion of its own idea of it-self. It will look at its experiences and its life. The mind will literally think it will die if this 'I' is not there.

The mind will keep fighting to hold onto this concept of 'I'. Hold this subject in mind with mental force or concentration and the mind experiences its own 'death' and its own birth in a single moment.

The idea/non-idea of 'life of I'

A mind that attaches to its own thoughts is confined to the reality it has defined.

If we are thinking about live, or about our thoughts, ideas, feelings, emotions or sounds we are then being whatever we are capable of thinking about. Limiting it to the extent of that thought, idea, experience, word or sound. Essentially all of these are just a construct defined, nothing more and nothing less. It does not exist anywhere or in anything, it is merely a construct that we have chosen to attach our being to or attach to our being.

By trying to define this 'idea' of living I or not living I is just creating another construct in our limitless limitation of our reality.

By living a reality, or believing there is such a thing as reality is living it. Any construct is still a limitation, even if it appears limitless.

At some level each of us know that we are only living in a world of concepts, but it is so persistent that we think we cannot not live it, but it is possible.

If this book has to be used as an idea, let it be used wisely. If you are to think about this book and it's ideas let it be done with self-awake-ness. Let this book be used, as a tool to guide your way, knowing that when the time comes everything in this book and every other possible idea or non-idea will not exist as it does now.

Know that the words used here are used for the expression of communication. In 'reality' 'words' are as 'empty' as their 'meanings'.

If you are reading this book you went to school to acquire some basic language skills. In the same school you were familiarized with the concept of the functions of your body. By trying to understand the function of our bodies we turned it into a subject that we can study. This subject can be stated or not, believed in or not, described, defined, given terms, symbols and concepts.

According to the study you learned in school that the body has basic functions. One of the central features of the body is the nervous system. The nervous system is composed of three parts: Sensory system (most of the activity, based on the senses that can cause an immediate response or the information can be stored as a memory that can help in determining future bodily actions), motor system (controls bodily functions you are 'consciously' unaware of) and then the information processing system that determines the 'correct' and 'appropriate' motor action and to provide abstract thinking. Some area are concerned with storage of the information, called memory, while other assess sensory information to determine if something is pleasant or unpleasant, painful or soothing etc. In this area the information is determined, and when the determination is made signals are

transmitted to cause the motor movements.

Due to the nature of this system, the sensory and information processing ability, is mistaken for being-a-person-and-living-as-a-personality-in-a-world-navigated-by-its-mind-to-such-an-extent-that-it-believes-that-it-and-any-concept-originating-from-it-is-ultimately-real. So life is no longer experienced as such, but instead you are living 'I' of sensory activity and the activities of the information processing system.

So you might ask why this occurs? Why am I living my 'life of 'I'?

It is not the ability but the tendency to hold onto that ability and the products of the ability that creates the confinement –holding onto is done by ascribing excessive validity to the ability and the products of the ability.

The ability to conceptualize builds the illusion of boxes in a non-box environment. And the creature that is doing the conceptualization does not know or chooses to ignore the knowing that its ability is only a limited tool. And even if it does know, it knowingly or unknowingly clings to the mental processes of that which it likes or finds pleasurable. The creature thus holds onto these mental processes hoping that by processing them they will not disappear and because it fears its own disappearance (death) it holds onto any idea that holds onto the existence or non-existence of life.

The concept in this book is a non-concept. The non-concept of the concept is more a lack-of-concept. The lack-of-concept for seeing things just as they are, not as a concept but experientially observed. Any possible hypothesis is just a 'hypothesis' and not the practice of observing life.

The mind however, does need to think, it does need to process, as it is life. What it processes and how is an ever-changing never-constant always-changeable process. Use the 'concept' in this book as a guide to direct your thoughts, to direct your own understanding of your own life through the acceptance and understanding of your own ability to conceptualize. Use your thought-ability wisely by knowing that they are useful but that these thoughts are ultimately not real. Your emotions, feelings, sensations and memories have a specific function to help you navigate this world. When you hold onto these you are holding onto things that do not exist.

In concept it might seem so familiar and so simple. It is that simple. To be, is letting go of what you never really had to begin with. When you truly let go then you let go of letting go.

In reality there aren't any dualities. There is no aging, youthfulness, sickness,

health, beauty, unattractiveness, past, future, idea or non-idea. It is only in thought that these can exist to be observed and defined. The only notion that remains is 'life', 'peaceful and at ease'. The only 'you' that remains is 'peaceful and at ease'.

There is no promise of everlasting life, love or happiness since the 'experience' of 'reality' is not a thing. There is no 'life' 'you' or 'peaceful and at ease' or 'final goal' or 'final destination' that is tangible or that can be experienced. All of these are only found in thought. And thought is very short lived, no matter how hard you try to hold onto any thought it cannot last, that is the nature of thought, of consciousness.

Where there is nothing and yet everything, there is not mere meaningless nothingness, but definite potentiality, internal openness to infinite possibilities eternally experienced in a single moment.