

# NAKED AWARENESS

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This article consists of excerpts from three chapters from a forthcoming book to be titled, *The Latch*. The book consists of three chapters of prose and eight chapters of poetry which are written in the style now called "ring composition". Ring composition was the literary style used when literature made the transition from spoken word to written word and typically included an introduction, a midpoint called the turn and a final section called the latch. In my book there are three chapters written in prose with four chapters of poetry in the first half and four more in the last half such that the themes of these chapters relate "across the circle" to one another in a style known as parallelism. The first four chapters of poetry trace the evolution of consciousness that has ended with us in a rather desperate ecological, political and fiscal situation. The final four chapters of poetry propose an alternative perspective on this untenable mess. The prose sections provide a setting for this and draw out the conclusions that arise from it with the latch being the section that connects us back to the beginning, echoing T. S. Elliot's famous lines, "the end of all our exploring/will be to arrive where we started".

Awareness of nowness is the basis for identification of everything that appears via sense perception or imagination. To return to this is to return to the source. It is the light that brings things out of darkness, that allows them to have identity. It is the ground of meaning, cognition, sensation, emotion, memory and all the endless stream of thoughts and perceptions that arise in the mind as awareness finds itself in the world.

Naked awareness, allowing phenomena to arise in the stream of consciousness without clinging or attachment, is the return to basic nature. This watchfulness is the very essence of human consciousness without mediation or modification. This is the phenomenological ground of basic humanness. To gain this ground releases compassion as a natural reflex. This is compassion without limitation, unprejudiced, freed from limitations, embracing all, rejecting none. Once basic humanness is experienced it is naturally empathetic to all other humans without distinction.

Uncontrived awareness allows the free natural flow of whatever arises. Not holding self liberates. The fabrications of mental analysis fall apart and disappear like waves settling back into the great ocean. This uninhibited naked ease abandons all pretence. Then you can be joyful in any circumstance, nonjudgmental, beyond good or evil, tolerant in any company. The dynamic energy of this awareness cuts through to this intrinsic self clarity. It is unfabricated and free of elaboration so that the all pervading essence of human nature and of great nature itself shines through. This primordial purity dissolves phenomena into emptiness which like space itself has no birth and no cessation. Our own intrinsic nature is this self arising path to freedom. Mountain like, it creates an elevated perspective, ocean like, it has great equanimity, dance like, it flows spontaneously. To dwell in this unmoving equalness is to remain naturally in your own self-present primordial essence which is equal to nature itself.

The light of appreciative discrimination allows appearances to come forth out of wholeness. Relaxation into the natural unmodified state allows appearances to recede back into wholeness. Once you associate appearances with cognitive units of meaning, once you have a word attached conceptually to an appearance, it requires a special awareness to allow it to fall back into wholeness. To empty cognitive attachment from appearance creates the intrinsic awareness, free from conceptual elaboration, so that phenomena dissolve into basic space. This unwavering equanimity dwells without seeking in pure spontaneity

What lies beyond this penetralium of mystery? To sacrifice the self on the altar of emptiness cuts loose the reactive habituated, mechanical, conditioned prejudices and feeds a new identity that celebrates the imaginative process of the universal intelligence that takes us back to where we began. When the grand archetype of the ancients, the basic principle of organization, was the circle, life on this earth was defined in relation to the perfect symmetry

of the sun moving across the vast expanse of the sky, echoed by the great full moon following its trail, both moving within the circle of the horizon, within the cycle of the seasons, the wheel of the Milky Way overhead - its constellations revolving around the north star, racing along the ecliptic of the black face of the firmament with rotating, whirling, wheels within wheels. The ancient imagination was identified with the cycles of nature, and, consequently, products of their art embodied and reflected these principles. This was mirrored in the *oroborus* (the snake with its tail in its mouth), the yin yang, the *triskelion* and the *enso*, (the Zen master, brush in hand). The forces of nature were perceived to move in circular patterns and, if you identified with nature's course, your art and philosophy would likewise use the circle as the model of composition. Even now modern poetry works with the principle of analogy and metaphor which can be seen as archaic remnants of the principle of "As above so below" which still survives as a correspondence or parallelism between two levels of meaning in the structure of a work of art.

The flashbulb of mindfulness, lucid and alert, is the house of being. The ground of all being is a priori the ground of our being. Basic unfabricated awareness is as vast as the realm of space or the flow of time. The continuum of time space awareness has direct immediate responsiveness which generates expressive displays of spontaneous adornments. The play of the dynamic energy of phenomena proliferates and dissolves in the matrix of awareness. These apparitions take any form from representations of materiality, to imaginal fantasy, to dream, all clothed with cognition and draped with emotion. This stirring of thought and sensation arises as the basic responsiveness of awareness. The multiverse of appearances and potentials all transpire in the essential space of awareness. Appearances are vivid yet empty. This basic space of awareness is the point of view of "just as it is" without the processing of conceptual manipulation or judgment. From this place all that arises is perceived as ornaments on empty space. This world that is manifest in our awareness is, like all other perceptions, apparent yet inherently nonexistent.

The continual displays that parade across awareness have a magical quality of spontaneous presentation which are immediately qualified by a myriad of meanings that erupt in its wake. No effort is required, nothing need be done. Meanings arise and fall as naturally occurring emanations, equal to any other sensation, processed in this natural flow like leaves falling into the cool dank compost of the earth, with the smell of old rain, with the subtle scent of time itself, doing its work. Direct apprehension cuts through all sense of permanence to ride the flow of the stream of consciousness without holding, allowing each thing that arises to express itself without binding it to an abiding identity. Like old stone walls unplumbed by the weather, all things arise and decay, even these oracle bones, even the hardest granite, measured in geologic time yield to impermanence. Despite the best efforts of scientists, philosophers, theologians and cosmologists the universe remains a mystery, being the stochastic interplay of the vibrant energy of elemental particles, momentarily configured in our perceptions, constituting a string of inferences we heretically refer to as knowledge. Even our knowledge is but glorified ignorance.

Modernity has taken human life on this planet to the edge of extinction. Each eon introduces a new paradigm and the one we have now has humanity dominating nature and our worth measured by our possessions. Things are not what they seem, something is deadly wrong. It doesn't take extraordinary vision to see that human beings are not doing a good job with the earth, with our global relations among countries, between religions, or in fiscal affairs. If all people are one body the destruction of war is oxymoronic. The strife of war is but a parody of inner strife, which, when resolved, ignites fires of creative energy. These flames immolate the self, not on the battlefields of war, but to the creative clarity that overcomes attachment to personal opinions, to historical setting, to geographic place, to hopes and fears, to opinions and prejudices, to greed and possessiveness. All sacrificed on the altar of this art. The labyrinth of the mind, strange, mysterious, titanic, is the stage that re-enacts the majestic contact with nature. This creates a sublime intimacy that is our innermost anthropic birthright. Herein is the fulfillment of life, not something found by faith or by searching, rather only by being. Like asking what is the meaning of a flower, what is the

meaning of a butterfly, what is the meaning of a snake, simply that it is. This is the raw rapture of being, of being alive, of recognizing your own being.