

GUIDING THOUGHTS

**MEDITATIONS ON 'THE NEW YOGA'
AND OTHER SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS**



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WHO MY WRITINGS ARE AND ARE NOT FOR

There is a world of difference between seeking true spiritual *self-knowledge* and narcissistic *self-seeking* of a sort that seeks no spiritual knowledge of *the world* and takes no spiritual interest in the world save as a means or obstacle to personal healing, salvation and complacent spiritual *self-satisfaction*. No one whose interest lies solely in the *text* of their own *personal* lives and those of others, no one without an innate all-consuming interest in the infinitely larger reality that is the *context* of those lives – in human history and culture, in philosophy and science, religion, in the spiritual evolution of humanity and the ultimate mystery of all that is – no one lacking interest of *this* sort will ever ‘resonate’ or ‘connect’ with my writings on The New Yoga - for even if they read them they will lack the necessary motivation to devote themselves to an intensive, meditative study of them. For it is not *before* but only *through* such long-term meditative study that a sense of connection can arise - and undreamt of dimensions of living experience begin to emerge from what seem like mere conceptual abstractions.

With the *right* interest and motivation even the most philosophically untrained of individuals have found these apparent abstractions mysteriously connecting with them and working on their souls. Without such interest however, connection with my work can only be made through direct encounter with me and direct experiential initiation. Yet even those granted the most powerful of initiatory experiences will reap nothing from them, will soon lose their sense of them, or even dismiss or devalue them - if they feel such experiences only on a purely personal level - rather than letting them open them to the power of the divine, letting this power *transform* their relation to their own personhood and reveal to them the riches of its divine, trans-personal source. It is not the purpose of The New Yoga to identify religious truth with the symbols of tantric religious philosophy but rather to “... lead mankind behind the symbolism on which religion has relied for centuries” (Seth). To do so requires a direct symbol-free experience of the spiritual realities behind this symbolism. Only those capable of this symbol-free experience can unlock the secrets of symbols for others – not just the symbols of religion but also those of modern science, not just Eastern religious symbols but those of *all* religions, and not by simply *dispensing* with those symbols but by showing how the symbols themselves, properly understood, lead beyond themselves into experiences of symbol-free or pure awareness.

WORDS AND THE WORDLESS IN SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

“There is a wordless knowledge within the word.” This ‘knowledge’ has the character of an as-yet undifferentiated inner knowing, a still wordless, symbol- and thought-free awareness. *Wording the wordless* - giving expression to this undifferentiated and unformulated awareness - requires the most intellectually refined differentiation of words and the greatest precision of verbal formulation. Only in this way can the wordless inner *knowing* that lies within the word be transformed into true spiritual *knowledge*. That is why those spiritual teachers who use words but nevertheless disparage them as ‘mere’ words do not in any way do justice to that wordless awareness or inner knowing (Jnana/Gnosis) that they wish to express. Indeed they reveal an outright disrespect for every great historic tradition of written spiritual teachings. For the aim of all such traditions is to give new and ever more refined, differentiated and therefore *truer* verbal expression to “the wordless knowledge within the word”. Thus a teacher who feels free to use words in any way they choose, or to freely substitute one word or concept for another as if it made no difference, creates a false dualism between the word and the wordless – allowing their own wordless knowing to get lost or distorted through a loose and undifferentiated use of language. Every religious and spiritual tradition which has found written expression is of course open to many varieties and levels of interpretation. More importantly however, the deepest and greatest of these traditions have been traditions *of* interpretation. By this I mean that the most spiritually advanced texts of these traditions are often not their primary scriptures but commentaries on or interpretations of them. A tradition of interpretation is one in which one commentator after another has taken up previous interpretations of a primary scripture in order to refine it even further and thus bring the inner truth present in that primary source or scripture to full expression. In marked contrast to the West however, in the Eastern yogic and tantric tradition any new interpretative treatise or ‘tantra’ - no matter how brilliant or original - is presented not as a *critique* of earlier writers, commentators and interpreters but as an act of *reverent gratitude* to them. The gurus of the East always began their writings by acknowledging their debt to those of earlier gurus, recognising that words *never* spring directly from one’s own awareness but are also “...half someone else’s” (Bhaktin). They recognised too that no greater *recognition* or more grateful *thanks* could be granted an earlier guru’s wordless wisdom than by meditating the still *unthought* dimensions of that guru’s words - thus helping to bring the wordless knowing within them to greater recognition and fruition.

THE THINKER AS ARTIST AND DANGEROUS HALF-TRUTHS

It makes no more sense to 'agree' or 'disagree' with the works of a truly great spiritual thinker and teacher than it does to agree or disagree with the works of a great composer or painter. Great thinkers are great *artists of thought* and deserve first of all to be acknowledged and respected as such. Like artists of other sorts, though one may or may not understand their works, may or more not 'like' or 'dislike' them, that is not the point when it comes to assessing their inner truth or greatness. For just as disliking provides no ground in itself for disagreeing with a great thinker, neither is liking or agreeing with them any guarantee of deep understanding. The work of a great thinker, like that of a great artist is unending. For just as the great artist is forever discovering new modes of artistic expression, so is a great scientist, thinker or teacher forever uncovering new, hitherto unthought questions to meditate and ponder. That is why no great scientist, thinker or teacher will ever imply or tell you that 'this is all you need to know' - for by doing so they would imply that 'this is all there is to be known' - thereby revealing that they have no interest whatsoever in the still unknown and unthought, no spiritual and scientific reverence whatsoever for the inexhaustible mystery of the universe and the inexhaustible depths of thought itself. Even if they count themselves as enlightened spiritual teachers, they make themselves as ridiculous as a composer or painter who proclaim their own works to be 'all there is' to be composed or painted. The particular arrogance of modern science lies not only in the naïve belief that at some point in the future it could claim as its own *all* there is to know about the universe, but also that what it does 'know' is established unquestionable truth. Hence the arrogance of those practitioners of medical science who claim to authoritatively 'know' all there is to know about what is 'wrong' with the patient simply by virtue of already having a label, cause and cure for their disease - without ever having questioned what they mean by 'disease', why it should mean something is 'wrong' with someone - for this would mean raising the whole question of whether diseases themselves have *meanings* and not just 'scientific' causes and cures. To claim a proposition as 'true' or 'truer' than another is one thing. To claim it as the *whole truth* is another - and always *false*. That is why spiritual thinkers and teachers who seek only to *simplify* truth in neat packages end up presenting the most dangerous truths of all, namely *questionable half-truths presented as unquestionable whole truths*. The more *genuinely effective* people find these half-truths in the short-term the more dangerous or dead-ended they can be in the long-term.

RESTING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Philosophy is an elaboration of different kinds of [direct] spiritual experience. The abstractions of high-grade metaphysics are based on spiritual experience and derive their whole value from the experiences they symbolise.

Abhinavagupta

The shallowness and oversimplifications of so much New Age literature and teachings on yoga, tantra and spirituality derives not least from the fact that so many New Age authors, self-proclaimed spiritual teachers or 'celebrity gurus' have never intensively studied or even heard of the giants on whose noble and refined spiritual intellects and "high-grade metaphysics" their simplistic teachings rest, even while misrepresenting them. As a result the profound esoteric treatises or 'tantras' of these great spiritual thinkers and teachers of the past remain relatively unknown and inaccessible to most – for there is no longer anyone capable of understanding them sufficiently to make their seemingly inaccessible or archaic works accessible in today's world. A chief purpose of my work is to do justice to the giants on whose shoulders my own new spiritual thinking and teachings rest, and to do so in a way that is accessible to anyone who, even without foreknowledge of these giants, is prepared to spiritually exercise their intellect. I do not offer spiritual teachings which demand that the reader suspends or puts aside their mind and intellect, but rather teachings aimed at cultivating the *spiritual intellect*. Yet this is a term that in today's intellectual and spiritual climate is seen as a 'contradiction in terms'. For the intellect has long become identified with a purely calculative, commercial or dryly logical mode of conceptual thinking - one entirely emptied of soul and spirit - whilst the 'spiritual' continues to be mindlessly identified by the greatest of supposed spiritual minds with an empty state of 'no-mind'. Thus one popular and well-read spiritual 'guru' of our times presents – albeit through his own mind - a spiritual philosophy which asks us to free ourselves of mind completely, claiming that *thinking* itself is the greatest disease of our times. Yet another far deeper philosopher of our times of whom he was a compatriot - Martin Heidegger - saw otherwise, claiming instead that our epoch was one threatened by an unparalleled dearth - if not the near-death - of thinking itself – understood as *meditative thinking*. For this is another term that is a 'contradiction' in terms for the modern intellect, the scientific mind and would-be practitioners of 'yoga' and 'meditation'.

TWO THINKERS' MEDITATIONS ON THINKING

“Thinking has become a disease.”

Eckhart Tolle

“Thoughtlessness is an uncanny visitor who comes and goes everywhere in today’s world. For nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly.”

Martin Heidegger

“Man today is in flight from thinking ... But part of this flight is that man will neither see nor admit it. Man today will flatly deny this flight from thinking. He will assert the opposite ... and say - quite rightly – that there were at no time such far-reaching plans, so many inquiries in so many areas ... But it also remains true that [this] is a thinking of a special kind. Such thinking remains calculation even if it neither works with numbers nor uses a computer. Calculative thinking is not **meditative thinking**, not thinking which **contemplates the meaning that reigns in everything that is.**”

“This meditative thinking is what we have in mind when we say that contemporary man is in flight from thinking ... **Therefore the issue is keeping meditative thinking alive.**”

“[Meditative thinking] is a thinking which allows content to **emerge within awareness** ... Now thinking which constructs a world of objects understands these objects; but meditative thinking begins with an awareness of the field within which these objects are ... **the field of awareness itself.**”

“I know nothing about how this [new] thinking is ‘effective’. It could also be that the path of thinking today leads toward silence, so that thinking may be protected from being thrown out within a year. **It could also be that it takes three hundred years to become ‘effective’.**”

Martin Heidegger

NARCISISM, SCIENCE AND THE SPIRITUAL INTELLECT

The total death of thinking can only be averted by the birth of a New Thinking - one which also restores the nobility and refinement of the *spiritual intellect* and or *meditative thinking*, both acknowledging and *valuing* it in the way in which all the greatest spiritual teachers of the Middle Ages did. For all the horrors of the 20th century and today's world notwithstanding, our time is not distinguished by being the most genocidal or war-scarred of historic epochs – just reading The Old Testament is testament enough of this. Then again we need only remind ourselves that in almost all previous eras soldiers of war were motivated less by tribal or patriotic pride than by the promised 'rewards' of victory in battle - namely mass rape and pillage. What *does* distinguish our epoch, even from the Middle Ages, is not inhuman cruelty, genocide or rapacious greed but two quite different things: on the one hand an unparalleled culture of *narcissism* – albeit one which has nothing to do with the achievement of true individuality or deep knowledge of *self* – and, on the other hand the death and near-death of any deep spiritual knowledge of *the world*. Thus it is that people seek in spiritual teachings and literature only what they *can get for themselves* - whilst leaving all *knowledge of the world* to so-called 'sciences' totally lacking in any spiritual understanding of its true nature, and used only to abuse and rape nature. Thus whilst many people have deserted 'The Church' to seek a new type of spirituality that meets their personal needs, modern science – newly consecrated with the quasi-religious title of 'The Science' - has become the secular *religion* of the West, one no less dominated by unquestioned assumptions, dogmas and symbols, all accepted on faith, than the most orthodox or fundamentalist of Christian Churches. The attraction of so many to quasi-Buddhist philosophies of 'no-mind' is that they require no exercise of the mind or intellect – even though this is what the very term 'Buddhi' meant. The principle of 'no-mind' is itself based on a fundamental *misconception* of the nature of that awakened ('Budh') mind-free awareness that only the mind and intellect freed of ignorance ('Ajnana Buddhi') can reflect. For the *awareness* of our mind, ego and thoughts is itself something *innately* free of mind, thought and ego - and therefore does not require a *surrender* of mind, thought and ego. Nor does it require an 'alter ego' in the form of an inner watcher or witness with which we can 'observe' our thoughts – a reduction of awareness to a split off part of the self. The great truth of Kashmir Shaivism, reaffirmed in The New Yoga is that *awareness as such* is not a *property* of mind, or of any self, god, ego or witnessing 'alter ego'. Instead awareness as such is the very *essence* of self and of the divine - uniting both.

THE YOGA OF THE MIND AND INTELLECT

“The highest class of *Sadhakas* [practitioners] ... are capable of adopting their *buddhi* [mind and intellect] as the instrument of their yogic discipline. The *buddhi* existing in close proximity to the Self that is of the nature of Samvid [pure awareness] is the best medium to reflect and reveal its real nature and divinity. This *buddhi* is of a crystal-clear nature, like a mirror. In the aspirants, the *buddhi* is seen as covered by a veil of ignorance, hence it is generally incapable of reflecting the true nature of Self ... Thus the ignorance-covered *buddhi* is the prime locus of all ignorance which lies at the root of bondage. Hence the aspirants who are required to employ their *buddhi* as a means of spiritual discipline are required to ... achieve complete purgation of ignorance from it, so that it may serve as the perfect reflecting medium, like the spotlessly clear mirror, for the revelation of their Self-luminous nature and divine Essence.”

From commentary on the *Tantraloka* of Abhinavagupta by Deba Brata SenSharma

BEYOND 'ENLIGHTENMENT'

Enlightenment or 'liberation' (*Moksha/Mukti*) is understood both in the 'non-dual' (*Advaitic*) tradition of Kashmir Shaivism, as in The New Yoga, as a capacity to achieve unity ('Yoga') with the divine in its very essence – as a singular and unbounded field of pure awareness (Chit), one that is the source of all manifest realities and yet transcends all the differentiated aspects of our experience (desires, impulses, sensations, emotions, perceptions, thoughts etc.) through which we come to know our world. The difference is that in The New Yoga enlightenment is not seen as an ultimate *end-stage* of human spiritual development but rather as a beginning – that which first allows us to leave the spiritual 'nursery school' of human existence and take our first steps into a bigger, wider world – that multidimensional universe of awareness in which the physical universe is but one dimension of manifest reality among countless others, and the specific character of human experiencing one among infinite possible modes of experiencing.

This understanding of enlightenment is no different in principle from the recognition that, even in our world, other species experience physical reality in ways unimaginable to human beings - being not only distinct biological species with different bodies and sense organs, but distinct *species of consciousness*. Like death, enlightenment is not an end-station but a door. Enlightenment is that which allows us to fully open the door of death both when we die and whilst still physically alive – allowing us to begin to *explore* the multidimensional universe of awareness. It is not the end but the beginning of an *eternal and infinite adventure in consciousness*. It does not take us beyond the realm of differentiated experience and manifest reality *per se*, but instead opens us to an infinite range of entirely *new* modes of experiencing of a sort we cannot even imagine so long as we identify manifest reality only with physical reality, life only with mortal physical life, and differentiated experiencing itself only with the highly species-specific nature and evolution of our own human modes of experiencing. True enlightenment brings with it the recognition that our planet, like all planets, is but one partial manifestation of a single tiny *plane* of awareness - albeit one that is itself an intersection of countless others of which, without enlightened awareness we remain unaware. For those whose pure, enlightened awareness does indeed allow them to leave the reincarnational cycle however - whether within this very life or in the afterlife – the journey *of awareness* has only just begun.

PLEASURE AND 'THE POWER OF THE NEW'

The danger lurking in most interpretations of Hindu and Buddhist spiritual traditions lies in *reducing* the entire meaning of *human* life to attaining a state of 'enlightenment' and reducing enlightenment itself to freedom from the human suffering associated with physical life and the reincarnational cycle. Yet if we see the sole reward of enlightenment as existence in a timeless state of unchanging bliss and union with the divine awareness we negate the essential nature and power of pure awareness as an inexhaustible and unending source of creativity - of *ever-new* dimensions of experience and of manifest reality. We confuse a static and unchanging 'now' with what Michael Kosok calls the "endlessly once" - that which is never repeated but "makes all things new". The power of pure awareness is *the power of the new*, and the bliss of pure awareness is the *pleasure* of the new - both belonging to the *creative* essence of the divine. Therefore if we deny the unendingly creative nature of the *divine awareness*, we also deny all creative meaning to ordinary *human existence*. As an unending creative source of *new* modes of experiencing, new realities and new planes of manifestation, the divine is also the source of ever-new expressions of *human* creativity - including new religions, sciences, arts, philosophies and psychical abilities. To reduce human life to 'suffering' is to deny all meaning to the unique expression of the divine that is *human life and creativity* - thus invalidating the *entire creative journey* of human consciousness, culture and civilisation - past, present and future, and the pleasure and fulfilment it has brought to human beings. The Buddhist belief that 'life is suffering', that its pleasures are transient, and that ultimate reality is a mere empty and infertile *void*, is the chief religious curse from which human beings sought release in the East through *tantra* - with its total affirmation of sensual bliss and pleasure, of the arts, and of the entire world of 'manifestation'. Thus the ever renewed and ever-new pleasure that can be derived from listening to a single Beethoven symphony is *inexhaustible* and stays with us forever - it is not in any way transient. The same applies to all the 'simple pleasures' of life, whether looking at a flower, enjoying sex, going for a walk or meeting a friend. Yet if such pleasures were merely *the same* each time they would not bring joy. The false opposition of 'joy' to 'pleasure' misses the point. Joy can be had at all times and has the *same* quality at all times - yet for human beings it also passes and is therefore transient. Pleasure on the other hand, is never the same and thus inexhaustible. For no pleasure is true pleasure, or a fresh source of joy, save for bringing us joy *anew* and in *ever-new* ways - save for 'the power of the new'.

FREEDOM FROM AND FREEDOM TO

A composer or painter calls themselves a composer or painter, not a Beethovenian or Picassoite. Karl Marx said 'I am not a Marxist'. Buddha would never have called himself 'a Buddhist' or Christ 'a Christian'. Lao Tse would have laughed in the face of anyone who called him a 'Taoist'. The great tantric teachers, whilst they spoke and wrote of 'tantra', called themselves nothing - for they knew themselves as inseparable from everything. Yet they knew what they *valued* most of all, something they did not call enlightenment but 'liberation' (*Moksha/Mukti*), a liberation understood not just as freedom *from* but freedom *to*. In The New Yoga, the freedom brought by awareness is like that of an artist or actor - not only freeing them from identification with any of their works or any of the parts they play but giving them freedom to create new works and act new parts *with* awareness - to engage in aware identification. Marx did not only seek the liberation of humankind *from* capitalism, but its freedom to create a truly free society, one in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." By 'liberation' he mean the liberation of the human essence, which he understood as *free creative activity* rather than uncreative 'wage slavery'. Liberation implies freedom *from* but it is meaningless unless it also liberates our freedom *to*. There are countless spiritual teachings which teach ways of achieving freedom *from* but not freedom *to*. It is important to be aware of this and be wary of spiritual teachers who teach only freedom *from* - whether from mind and body, space or time, from suffering or pain, from desires or emotions, from evil or injustice, greed and materialism – or teachers who deny the soul's innate striving for creative expression and fulfilment. For teachers who only know freedom *from* do not know *full* freedom. They do not even know what it means to be a teacher. For a teacher of any sort whatsoever cultivates and enhances their students' *freedom to*. Thus no teacher of a foreign language, for example, would dream of simply instructing their students to free themselves *from* their native language. They would teach the *new* language and with it the freedom *to* speak that new, additional language in an ever freer and more 'fluent' way. Those spiritual teachers who teach only freedom *from* do not know the true meaning of freedom as freedom *to*. They themselves are not truly free – for their own freedom *to* is used solely in pursuit of ever greater freedom *from*. True freedom *to* is the *power of the new*. It is the *creative freedom* with which each creature is endowed by the *creativity* that *is* the divine – the power (*Shakti*) of pure awareness (*Shiva*) out of which all things are forever renewed and *made new*.

AWARENESS AND THE NATURE OF 'THE NOW'

The distinction most central to The New Yoga is between all that we do or experience on the one hand, and the *awareness* of doing or experiencing it on the other. It demands no difficult leap from the differentiated realm of our everyday experiencing to a realm of pure or 'transcendental' awareness. For since awareness of a 'thing' - whether a plant, chair or our own bodies - is *not itself* a 'thing' of any sort, awareness is *intrinsically* pure or 'thing-free'. Similarly, since awareness of a thought or mental action is *not itself* a thought or mental action, awareness is also *intrinsically* thought- and mind-free. Therefore we need not cease thinking in order to achieve a state of pure, thought- and mind-free awareness, for *by its very nature* awareness, like space, is something essentially distinct and therefore *free* from all we experience within it - whether our body or mind, things or thoughts. Awareness *is* freedom – freedom from limiting identification with any elements of our immediate experience of 'the now'. Yet the other side of this freedom *from* is freedom *to*. Freedom to *affirm* all we experience, and the actor's freedom to engage in *active and aware* identification with different parts of themselves. Then there is the most basic freedom – the freedom to choose. That freedom comes from experiencing the 'now' as a space of ever-new potentialities that are in no way confined by our actual present experience - by the 'now'. For the true 'now' is not a point on an abstract line of *time* stretching from past through present to future. It is not even anything we can be aware of or experience in *time*. Instead it is the very *space* - more or less expanded or contracted - of the *awareness* within which our experience takes shape - our experience not only of what is but also of what *could* be or even *could have been*. To truly live 'in the now' therefore, is not just to be aware of our immediate actions and experience but to live in constant *awareness* of alternate *possible* ways of acting and experiencing – of breathing, standing, sitting, moving, feeling, thinking, acting, relating and communicating. Without awareness of what we are *actually* experiencing we cannot open our awareness to other *potential* ways of acting and experiencing, nor *freely choose between them*. And vice versa. That is why understanding that 'now' as a *space of potentiality* is the key to liberation as freedom *to* – the capacity to freely determine our actions and creatively shape our experience of ourselves, other people and the world around us. The true 'now' is a "spacious present" in which both past, present and future are *all* manifestations of a larger *space* of creative *potentialities*. Its power lies in it being a space *of* 'potentiality' or 'power'. "The power of now" is the power to creatively choose which of these *ever-new potentialities* to actualise – 'the power of the new'.

NARRATIVE, MUSIC AND METAPHYSICS

No literary *narrative* - personal, scientific or religious - can provide a mirror for the ultimate nature of reality and of the divine - pure awareness and its power. This is something that only metaphysics on the one hand, and music on the other can provide. The deepest truths of Eastern and specifically Indian religious thought came to expression in a profound metaphysics that long preceded and still transcends its much later Western counterparts. Only in middle Europe - specifically in Germany - did a similar metaphysics begin to emerge in the West. Only in Germany too was it also complemented and enriched by the wholly *new* metaphysical understanding that music itself *is* metaphysics, and that in essence all religions - all historic religious events and dramas - far from merely *inspiring* artistic imagination, music and metaphysical speculation, are themselves essentially nothing but creative and artistic *dramas*, 'staged' on earth but with their hidden *musical* source and meaning in the spiritual world and designed to communicate *metaphysical* truths. This new *Indo-Germanic* understanding of the true source of religious truth in the unity of *music* and *metaphysics* reached its apotheosis in the *musical-metaphysical dramas* of Richard Wagner and in the *metaphysical-musical symphonies* of Anton Bruckner. In the metaphysics of *tantra*, the divine absolute is understood as both pure awareness (*Shiva*) and pure power (*Shakti*), these being spiritually united in eternal sensual and sexual bliss. In Wagner's Ring Cycle the essence of religious truth and drama is consciously and explicitly presented through and *as* musical-metaphysical drama - a drama in which self-seeking greed, narcissistic love and the corrupting desire for power *over* others are metaphysically transcended by the pure sensual power *of* the music itself, and dramatically engulfed in the fire that, by destroying the fortress of the gods of power, war and wealth, reveals the healing light of pure awareness, avenges the rape of mother earth and the Rhine - and the abuse of its hidden gold - the philosopher's stone. The golden ring, a materialisation of the light and power of pure awareness itself, is no-one's private property - and all who take it as such are cursed thieves. Wagner reminds us of Bakunin's dictum that "property is theft", and that the radiant, fiery power of pure awareness cannot be owned or possessed as a material thing. Yet they can be reflected in the mirror of the mind and intellect, as personified in The Ring by the fire god *Loge*. For though caricatured by the all-too mortal 'gods' as a mere subservient 'demi-god' with a canny mind that can be exploited by others, he is in truth a personification of the divine fire of pure awareness that is *Shiva* and its reflection in the *spiritual intellect*.

THE MUSICAL METAMORPHOSIS OF EMOTIONAL PAIN

The *awareness* of an emotion is not *itself* an emotion - and is thus innately free of emotion. Yet whilst not being emotional in nature, pure awareness is always *mooded* – always imbued by a particular ‘tone’ and sensual quality. Every emotion that is not labelled by the mind but simply felt in an immediately bodily way can be experienced as a unique tone or chord of feeling awareness – one that is no more ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ than a musical tone or chord. Every tone and chord of our feeling awareness, like every musical tone or chord has its own distinct sensual qualities of lightness or heaviness, brightness or darkness, sharpness or flatness, clarity or dullness. Yet to directly feel a sensual quality of awareness such as heaviness, dullness or flatness for example, is not the same thing as to feel ‘depressed’ - for ‘depression’ is a mere mental label.

Mentally labelled emotions or emotional states are *verbal interpretations* of feeling tones – of the silent music of the soul. Music on the other hand is its *direct expression*. It is also an infinitely more differentiated *language* of feeling tone than verbal language, with its highly limited *vocabulary* of emotion words such as ‘anger’, ‘fear’, ‘sadness’ and ‘joy’, and its equally limited vocabulary of emotional states such as ‘anxiety’ and ‘depression’. That is why ‘emotional literacy’ is so misleading a term, for it denies the infinitely richer capacity for experience and expression of *feeling tone* offered by the cultivation of musical sensitivity. It is no accident that in the age of the ‘talking cure’ and ‘narrative therapy’, so-called ‘music therapy’ has become marginalised. For the latter requires a recognition of the *innately* therapeutic power of music and its innate superiority to words as a language of the soul and its feeling tones. Yet not only bland popular music but also many types of modern ‘spiritual music’ are banal, impoverished or artificially beautified or harmonised expressions of the music of the soul. Like many superficial spiritual teachings, much supposedly ‘spiritual’ music aims only at the transcendence of ‘negative emotions’ or ‘emotional pain’ – rather than their musical transformation or *metamorphosis*. Yet the true essence of music *as* therapy lies not in using it to spiritually calm or counter ‘negative emotions’ with serene harmonies. Instead the innate healing power of great music – not least music of the most seemingly negative or *agonised* sort - lies in our ability to feel ourselves into it in such a way that we hear it *speaking* for our “pain body” (Tolle) thus transforming our most intense and intimately *personal* experiences of emotional pain or ‘negativity’ into a transcendent *affirmation* of the inner music of our soul.

THE WISDOM OF ALLAN PETTERSSON - COMPOSER

“When we overcome our personal horrors and make art of them, then our music has a message.”

“The identification with the small, unsightly, anonymous and the eternally immutable but ever new and fresh. It is in this way that one saves one’s own life.”

“The music forming my work is my own life, its blessings, its curses: in order to rediscover the song once sung my the soul. It originated among people of small means who lacked self-confidence, who were treated like dogs, blacks as well as whites, people for whom life was nothing more than the cursed obligation to die. Nonetheless they sympathised with others, the power of yearning filled them with a faith – and that is when the song broke out, fervently, pleadingly ... until the world asked them to shut up.”

“When we stare out to the darkness or, more precisely, stare into the darkness, into the world of infinity, we see nothing – we grown-ups, we who are all-too grown up. But let us look into the darkness like the child we once were ... yes perhaps that is it.”

“In the hospital world in which I live, I experience a unique energy within me. I sit on the bed and write music that has nothing to do with the world of that last station: music with a life of its own. The surroundings force me, as always, to force my way down within me, in order to reach the roots of my life. It is just that, the fact that something in me preserves its integrity, does not let itself be destroyed, that fills me with wonder, as before a miracle.”

“There are two ways out for the man who is at the end, suicide or madness. The first is his deliverance but strips him of his role as a medium. As far as the second solution is concerned ... are we really sane in the course of the creative act? No, we ought to be seized by the holy delirium of creation ... ”

“Death is my constant shadow, is stranger than I am. Or is it HE himself, the God who experiments with himself as a man, in another life form?”

'PAIN', 'PRESENCE' AND THE ESSENCE OF THE DIVINE

'Negativity' is not just a mental attitude or emotional state, something that removes us from the living immediacy of the present or 'now', or the result of our removing or absenting ourselves from the life of the now. For 'presence' as such is not conceivable without its own negation – without *absence*. The presence of one thing is the absence of another. And the primary character of awareness is that it *withdraws into presence*. Thus the more engaged or absorbed we are in some aspect of our immediate activity and experiencing - the more present it is in our 'consciousness' - the less *aware* we may be of it. So even though we are 'conscious' when dreaming, thinking, breathing, moving, speaking etc. we are not necessarily *aware* – for this would imply awareness of dreaming, awareness of the thoughts we are having *as* thoughts, and awareness of the way we are breathing, moving, speaking etc. The withdrawal of awareness – its absence or absorption in the flux of immediate present experiencing - is something that can only be overcome through the 'negative' of 'the now' - through awareness of *absence in presence*. 'Negativity' as pain is an integral part of the present, for it is an acutely felt *presenting of the absent* – whether in the form of an absent god or person, as loss or disappointment, as the unattained or unfulfilled, the unseen or unheard, the unfelt or unthought. The idea that pain is a mere negative consequence of not being fully *present* - a stuckness in emotional identification with the past or future - is a denial of the nature of negativity, pain and absence as inherent dimensions of the now - of presence itself. For if they are not to be reduced to arbitrary labels and *judgements*, the very terms 'positive' and 'negative' need to be understood in their literal sense – as (positive) *presence* and (negative) *absence*. Thus though pain as felt absence is the 'negative' dimension of presence, it is also felt in a most intensely present or 'positive' way - as something most definitely or 'positively' *there*. In this sense pain, like pleasure, is one of the most intensely 'positive' or 'present' aspects of immediate experiencing possible for human beings. Yet whilst pain is an experience of presence *as absence*, pleasure is pleasure in *presence as presence*. At a deeper level however, pleasure is a profound experience of *presence in absence* – absence not felt as painful emptiness but as a *divine fullness* of awareness. For the divine awareness – 'God' – is what *withdraws* or *absents into presence and manifestation*. This 'absencing' of God can be felt as a hollow emptiness, as "the death of God", or even as 'abandonment' by God. Yet it can also be felt as the very *essence* of the divine - *its presence in absence* - like the presence of the Sun in *its* dark absence, made magically luminous by the light of the waxing *moon*.

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