

# What is enlightenment?



# PREFACE

**Seeker** (noun) a person who is attempting to find or obtain something.

This is characterised. I'm not currently having it and obtaining it in the future.

Another characteristic is that it is some **thing** that will be integrated.

**Explorer** (noun) a person who put themselves in the way of discovery.

**Discover** (verb) to find unexpectedly,

**Recognise** (verb) re-cognise. To know again.

The intent with the following words (pages) is to *give you the tools* to navigate daily life with peace calm and equanimity.

The ramifications of recognising **what is actual** is enough to bring this about.

These pages are dedicated in helping you discover how/when you are living in a fantasy world. (I hope this sentence provokes outrage...)

Q: What is awakening?

Q: What is enlightenment?

A: i have no idea.

Actually, enlightenment is a word that i prefer not to use, as it means different things to different people.

For me, it is a mystery. It serves as a description of experience, but it lacks a physical presence as a concrete noun.

i prefer to use the word “awakening” or “liberation” as they describe something that is tangible for those no longer seeking.

First a caveat...

Everything that i say is from the perspective of this organism (with the vince label)

So, what is enlightenment?

It's An idea. A story.

There are many variations of it, especially in the pop zen genre, but I have to say that I have no idea if any of them are accurate.

What I can talk to, is the experiencing that I call ‘waking up’, or ‘liberation’.

These terms obviously come from the analogy of being asleep or sleepwalking, and the analogy of being captive or being a prisoner.

What is sleepwalking?

It can be described from two perspectives.

The first from the perspective of doing it.

The second from the perspective of observing it.

From the first perspective there is no alternative. If you are doing it, then you probably don't know that you are.

From the second there appears to be options.



To be able to observe it there has been a shift. A recognition of an alternative.

From this perspective what occurs is that a realisation that sleepwalking was happening. That realisation usually happens after the event.

If we go to a movie knowing that the story is fictional, we voluntarily suspend disbelief in order to share emotions with the plot. Here there is the option to do this or not. (to varying degrees)

A sleepwalker doesn't have these options. They believe the plot to be real (actual) They are a prisoner to their beliefs. They take their beliefs to be facts.

The most glaring example of this is the belief that what we observe in 'the world' or 'other' people, is what is actual.

This, in spite of science of the brain/mind telling us that we really relate to an image that form in our brain rather than what is actual. This happens because the brain is predictive in the way it works. It takes the least amount of information (from sense input - including mind) that it can to predict an outcome.

"It's really important to understand we're not seeing reality," says neuroscientist Patrick Cavanagh, a research professor at Dartmouth College and a senior fellow at Glendon College in Canada. "We're seeing a story that's being created for us."

Most of the time, the story our brains generate matches the real, physical world — but not always. Our brains also unconsciously bend our perception of reality to meet our desires or expectations. And they fill in gaps using our past experiences."

Just as we only know that we have been asleep when we wake up, we only know that we have been a prisoner of our beliefs when we are no longer captive.

When this happens we have the option to voluntarily suspend our disbelief for practical purposes, such as communicating.

So, the question is “Why wake up?” Isn’t the world ok with 99.9% of the population sleepwalking?

Over at LiberationUnleashed, there have been 2952 ex prisoners in the past 10 years. So if we say that there might be 10,000 awake being at the moment, then it is .1% of the population that isn’t deluded by beliefs. No wonder that there is so much shit happening.

### **What is being a prisoner?**

Dostoyevsky said “The best way to keep a prisoner from escaping is to make sure he never knows he’s in prison.”

We start to ‘train’ our offspring from the moment they are born. (maybe even before that)

Using repetition, we impress upon a baby the label (name) that it will carry for life.

We want it’s first word to be “daddy” or “mummy” (mommy if American)

We discourage (or even punish) it from crying.

i point these thing out as an example of how the ‘control’ is implemented.

It is done using Peer pressure

As a baby, it’s done fairly gently.. “Ssh litte baby.”

As a toddler it’s a little more aggressive “Be quiet! You’re too noisy.”

As a 6 yr old, the lessons get role specific. (This one is showing my age)

“Children should be seen and not heard.”

That’s the kind of conditioning from parents.

From peers at school/mates/etc, it’s approval/disapproval that shapes us.

Then there is being a prisoner to habits.

Anyone who has attempted to break a habit knows the strength of that cage.

\_Here is a [link](#) to a great description of what waking up is.  
It is my mate Paul at a zoom meetup of seekers and guides.



## **EXPECTATIONS**

Having been around quite a few people as they go through the gate, I observe expectations as one of the most frequent blocks to seeing what 'reality' actually is.

We can blame Guru stories and the attraction to drama in our society for focusing on stories of the initial epiphany that people have as they wake up. (because they usually have a 'wow' factor) This puts into our head, the idea of "bells and whistles".

We expect high drama to confirm that a significant shift has occurred.

Some common expectations

- That I will experience permanent bliss.
- That I will never get sick again.
- That I will be able to stop my thoughts.
- Money problems will be a thing of the past.
- I will be able to manifest prosperity.
- I will never hurt others again
- I will never develop dementia
- If I have kids, I'll be the perfect parent
- I will be physically beautiful
- I will never have any more interpersonal conflicts
- I will never again get angry

- I will never be hurt
- I will be loved (approval of others)
- I will always know what to do (control)
- I will always feel good (control feelings / bliss)

Of those I observed ‘waking up’, by far the majority woke up as a slow unfolding rather than a sudden explosion.

A friend of mine (Paul – the video is at the bottom of the page on [what is awakening](#).... But read the page before watching it.) who went through the archives at [Liberation Unleashed](#) (the archives is where ‘successful’ “gate crossings” threads are parked) and discovered that for the vast majority, the final epiphany happened when a mundane task was being... – was happening. a slow, unfolding

You’ll notice I said above that it was a “slow unfolding” for the majority of people... Perhaps here a rant about language... Language evolves from common usage and this stuff is certainly not common so, consequently, words to express much of what we experience, simply don’t exist.

In the beginning, I will use language in a pretty normal way. My use of words will focus on getting meaning across to you, and later on, we will start to investigate that too. So back to the word, unfolding... By using this word, I’m attempting to help you see that it is a revealing of what is already there.

Unfolding can have the connotation of a flower opening or a birthing and it probably will feel this way. ..for a while!

This period is referred to as the Honeymoon period. It starts (or seems to) when the 2nd Fetter (Doubt) falls. When the mind is freed from compulsive questioning... then there is a space where the wonder-full appreciation of the ever-changing stimuli of the senses.

There is a degree of ‘bliss’ in these early days of being liberated from the prison of social expectations.

Everything is viewed from the heart perspective.

There is no thought of either offensive or defensive aggression.



There is wonder all around. ..and then, along comes doubt.

“But what if you’re fooling yourself?” says thought. “what if you’ve only got an intellectual grasp of all this?” “Oh, the agony. It feels unbearable. I’m losing this beautiful state.”

...panic panic. Grab/Grasp/Cling/Claw/etc



The intent here is to help you wake up. Join us on this journey of discovery!

There are several ways that you could go about this...

1 Use this [website](#).

2 join group zoom guiding. (there are 3 each week)

3 Paid 1 on 1 guiding.

4 Oh, and if you're still an avid seeker, i do recommend [Liberation Unleashed](#) \_

There are currently 3 zoom group meetups each week. Just turn up...

Their recordings are published publicly on YouTube. Here: [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=vince+schubert](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=vince+schubert)

There is one each Saturday at 9pm (AEDT)

There is also one each Monday 6 am Sydney DAYLIGHT SAVING time – AEDT

One each Wednesday at 3pm (AEST)

Please note that it's always the same time on the same link Arriving late and leaving early is fine.

You can convert time zones here: <https://www.worldtimebuddy.com>

Click here to Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86991485768?pwd=WkIvNk9zS1Q0VlVMR3lENW12Um5DQT09>

Meeting ID: 869 9148 5768

Passcode: 083035 \_

If you want paid 1 on 1 guiding, you can book here: <https://calendly.com/vinceschubert/1-on-1-guiding>

Price for individual sessions is \$75USD (it will be collected during the booking process) Special circumstances will be considered.

Group meetups continue to be free.



If you're a spiritual seeker, then you probably think that you know what awakening is.

...but unless you have already 'woken up' you'll most likely be wrong about that.

Now before we look at What is awakening? let's consider one of the most frequent blocks to experiencing 'reality' – ..and that is expectations.

These writings are *about* waking up. (Ok, this is the first pointer..) i've emphasised the word "about" to highlight something that is really important.

If you think or say or read or hear or watch anything, and it is ABOUT something, then it is conceptual.

What is the difference between a concept and what is actual?

Concept means an abstract idea or notion created in the mind, while actual refers to something experienced by the body.

To put it simply, a concept is like an idea in our thoughts, whereas actual refers to sensory input.

'Reality' (i don't like this word. It carries too much baggage) means what you are experiencing now, while 'concept' refers to the content of thoughts and ideas.



When reading these words you will be having an intellectual experience.  
(experiencing a concept)

That is, you will be focusing on the content of your thoughts.

This is a problem with reading words.

They tend to stay in the head. The response to them goes unnoticed unless it is dramatic.

So, to get the most out of these words, understand that every single sentence is carefully considered.

With this in mind, pause at the end of a message (a sentence or a phrase) and focus on your bodily reaction.

To really grok what i am pointing at, will require you to have a particular attitude.

An attitude that leads to an unfamiliar perception.

A description of that attitude is what i call *Discovery mode*.

## Epiphany (e-piph-a-ny)

(n) A moment of sudden revelation; a poignant, sudden, profound understanding of something.

### **vince's epiphany**

When I woke up (back in 2011) it wasn't at Liberation Unleashed. It wasn't through the portal of no-self.

It was the culmination of 43 years of obsessive seeking and a lifetime of discontent before that.

That, and the chance synchronicity that all of the other conditions necessary for me to wake up, were present and aligned.

I had tried religion, hypnotherapy, gestalt therapy, rebirthing, encounter groups, meditation, yoga, Advaita, Autolysis, and other things that I don't even remember now.

When it happened it was because of a single conversation. In fact, it was a single line in that conversation that flipped a switch.

Searching the web I came across this bloke in America (Eric Gross) and that line that precipitated a shift in perspective, was when he told me that *"the mosquito bite of seeking will never heal while you keep scratching it."*

WHAM! In that moment, I knew that I couldn't be awake and still be a seeker.

I had to give up the identifying with being a seeker to be awake. They were incompatible.

Being awake meant accepting whatever was present NOW.

Being a seeker meant that I was looking for something to happen in the future.

All happenings are NOW...

Then, I had the realisation that these happenings weren't being seen in real time.

That seeing was always lagging real time by milliseconds.

That what was noticed was already done. Finished. ...and WHAM!!

Another realisation.. They're finished. They can't be changed, so wishing them to be different was only adding something that at the very least confused the seeing and quite possibly corrupted it to the point of intense distortion.

This meant not only was it smart to surrender willingly to whatever was noticed, but any other recourse was maladaptive. Stupid even.

*THIS IS IT* became a catchphrase. It says it all.

The seeking had stopped, but there was still searching the Web for like-minded others to communicate with, when around a week later I came across [Liberation Unleashed](#).

The first thing that they asked me was if a self existed as an inherently separate entity.

What a ridiculous question (I thought)

Although I hadn't considered it, the obvious answer was that there were only stories about Vince.

They asked me if an experiencer was necessary to experience something. This one I had to consider for a moment, but again it was obvious that the experiencer and the experienced only exist as mental constructs.

Turns out that anybody that has passed through the 'gate' at Liberation Unleashed can guide seekers to break the first Fetter.

That is the delusion that an inherently independent self exists and is running the show.

So vince started guiding in November 2011 and attributes a lot of 'deepening' to this.



## **A perspective**

OK, try this as a perspective from which to view experiencing.

Let's call our current experiencing. THIS.

Remember that everything here is from the relative perspective of the organism.

Let's also say that the only thing that is actual/real is THIS.

Besides THIS, there is THAT. (not really, but for the sake of communicating..)

THAT might be seen as everything that is not THIS.

We'll call it the absolute.

If you and i and a dog and an insect all look at (what we call) a tree, there will be 4 unique experiences of it.

Those experiences are the relative and what we call a tree can be considered part of an absolute.

If we introduce science to examine the tree, we might get closer to what it actually is, but we consider it unknowable and therefore are not interested in it for the purpose of this examination.

Everything that we are investigating is from the perspective of current experiencing.



Most of the people view the world at a level of concept.

Not only that, but they relate to what is conceptual as if it were actual.

This is useful for certain things, but not only is it not useful when looking for what is actual, but it obscures it. That is unless we are aware that this is how it works.

Beneath the level of concept, we can ascertain what is actual for us.

THIS. Our current experiencing.

Because conceptual viewing is so prevalent, we have to be alert that we don't get carried away into story land by the concepts that arrive to describe/explain THIS.

Because self is a concept, just as no-self is, there is no point in searching for either as something actual.

Just as a hole is defined by what encloses it, both self and no-self are defined by the story that encloses them. Without the walls and bottom, the hole can't exist. Without the stories, the concept of self can't exist.

Below the level of the self-concept, there is sensation. Nothing more! We have to come up to the level of concept to add anything. Full stop. Period.

We don't need complexity (as much as the mind loves it).

Just as the mind abhors silence and is compelled to fill it, the simplicity of what is, can be disturbing. It engenders an uncomfortable sensation.

The 'self' – the stories of self have the job of moving us away from those uncomfortable sensations. (more on this later)

Oh, and while i think of it (& more on this later too) How and Why questions are also an attempt to move away from those sensations.

**DO NOT ENGAGE HOW OR WHY QUESTIONS.** They are a waste of time.

The **WHAT** question is the only adaptive one. (more on this later)

To be satisfied with the not knowing.

Being satisfied with the mystery of how and why things happen is conducive to waking up.

Much is revealed with the wider perspective that comes from the acceptance of what life offers (THIS)

This is not a journey.



## Meta Cognition

What we are going to do is develop meta-cognition.

The main 'purpose' of this is to develop a skill that will help us break some old sleepwalking habits.

Q: What is meta-cognition?

A: It is being aware of being aware.

I guess that it is appropriate to consider what being aware is...

We won't fall back on 'common sense'. In this investigation, we will re-examine everything that we take for granted.

I will ask questions. The answer isn't important.

What is important is what reveals itself while considering the questions.

Writing or recording voice or video of the questions and what arises is recommended.

A good technique is to employ 'stream of consciousness'. Don't consider what you are going to say. Just blurt out whatever comes.

...anyway, back to being aware.

(climbs up on soap box) Awareness is an abstract noun. That is it doesn't actually exist as a concrete entity.

Problem is that either we don't remember about abstract nouns or we weren't taught them at school.

Well, that's not the problem.

Problem is that we take many abstract nouns to be concrete nouns.

It's a crazy language (English) when there's no word for being aware as a verb. We don't say "awareing", yet that is what happens.

So, we make something out of nothing, and we ignore something that exists.

Q: Where does all of this happen?

A: Mentally!

That's right, in our heads. Thoughts..

How does this happen?

Oh, no! (this is another soap box)

How and Why questions are to be avoided, because they take us down bottomless rabbit holes.

They have no answer but consume lots of energy and time.

The only 'legitimate' question is "What".

Alright, What happens when we believe that awareness is a thing?

We ignore the body...

We are so invested in mental gymnastics that we are unaware of sensations.

What happens when we are aware of sensations?

We pay attention to our sensory inputs. That's right! We are being aware.

The moment that we conclude that it is awareness that is being aware, we are back in the fantasy land of our head.

What i just told you is in your head, so let's move it to , or rather add it to experience:



### **An exercise in aware-ing:**

Mentally scan your body from the very top of head to the bottom of feet  
Notice if you detect movement of any kind in the body. Anything that you weren't aware of before you started doing this exercise.

Notice also, that the moment that you became aware of the sensations, that mind kicked in and you had thoughts ABOUT it.

OK, so we are going to do another version of it, but this time you will be ready for the arrival of thoughts.

You'll have to be quick, as thoughts arrive in milliseconds.

When you see thoughts coming, notice the existence of the thought but don't engage in what they are about.

Bring your attention back to the focus of your aware-ing.

That is, notice that you have become aware of yourself being aware of movement in the body. (incidentally, notice what happens to being aware of movement when you focus on being aware of being aware of movement. – You might have to read this several times. Until it is clear.)

Now, pay attention to sounds.

What do you hear that you weren't aware of before?

Are you aware that you are aware?

Are you thinking about your thoughts?



There is nothing that you can DO (to wake up)

Can you see that you are locking yourself into a seeker role? (This is a blunt club. The time will come when you will replace this question with “Can you recognise the beliefs that give rise to seeking and the seeker identity?”)

Can you see that you are waiting for something to happen in the future? If so, you are making hard work of what is really simple.

By simple, I mean not complex. Also not difficult. (these are really good clues – remember them)

The portal that I fell through showed me this.

There is nothing to do.

You don't earn liberation. It is there (here) for the seeing.

..and what is there to see? (rhetorical question) THIS. (clue – it's inside you)

What is THIS?

Whatever you are currently experiencing. Whatever it is.

Good/bad (ha)

Pleasant/unpleasant.

Spiritual/whatever the opposite of spiritual is.

You can't DO anything about it.

If these words provoke an intention to do anything, then let it be that you simply watch whatever arises as experiencing, without opinion. (employ meta cognition)

When you try to be loving/forgiving/having gratitude etc., it only gives strength to their opposites.

When you focus on them, and find that they are not present, then the

absence of them in yourself and others, colors your world and shuts out the sun.

Now, don't get hung up on how successful you are at this.

You can't fail, because even (apparent) failure is THIS.

How simple is it?

Nothing to do but watch (or not)

You are by nature a loving being.

A gracious being.

A forgiving being.

These things show themselves best when you are relaxed and peaceful.

This will happen as complete acceptance arises for whatever life-ing offers.

DOing is counterproductive.

There is another aspect to doing, which is effort. Effort to overcome or effort to achieve actually intensify that which we are trying to 'fix'.

For example, if we are trying to wake up, the more effort we put into it, the more we focus on being asleep. The lack of what we consider being awake comes to the fore.

DOing feeds into several delusions.

That is, that doing is expressing the delusion of control.

It feeds into the delusion of choice.

It is bigtime identification with the delusion of a separate self.

It hides the reality of intention.

It feeds concepts like success and failure.

The ideas of 'good' and 'bad' get involved with Doing.



## **Discovery mode..**

Discovery mode is an attitude.

It is coming from a place of “i don’t know anything & i’m interested in what shows up”.

It’s not a looking for anything.

It is a waiting to see what shows up.

There is a delight in whatever life offers, for it shows something about the current experience.

Recognition..

“there are, I think, attitudes that can be useful.

What I mean by “attitudes” is not easy to explain.

An attitude cannot be chosen or adopted, but only recognised within one’s own mind as already part of the scenery.

This is a key that you will hear from me repeatedly. RECOGNITION

Recognition without opinion.

We can’t control what comes up, but we can recognise it (if it happens) ..and we don’t recognise it because we have control over what thought happens to arise.

No.

Recognition arises (or not) because the conditions necessary for it to happen are present and aligned.

One of those conditions is the intention to recognise.

...but get this: whatever arises is OK.

Q: What are we looking to recognise at the moment?

A: We are looking to recognise what our attitude is.



The body doesn't lie..

The body is authentic. It will always express what the current experience is. Any of the negative emotions will be reflected by contraction.

The pleasurable will be reflected by expansion.

To see what the current attitude is, one only needs to examine the state of the body.

Remember, whatever you discover – don't have an opinion about it.

Even in describing it, examine your words for opinionated language.

If you find the presence of labels when describing experience, then look beyond them. You are only part the way to discovering what is present.

What is beneath labels is way too complex and subtle to describe accurately – but it can be experienced.



\*Something to help you adjust your perspective..

Thoughts..

The study revealed that the average person has about 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts per day.

Of those thousands of thoughts, 80% were negative, and 95% were exactly the same repetitive thoughts as the day before.

Your brain is a predictive organ..

It takes a small amount of input (only as much as it needs to create a story about how that will go.

For example:

You're walking along and turn a corner and a flash of a green cloud appears with a brown strait-ish thing under it.

Immediately, mind says "tree".

Then, within milliseconds the image of a tree appears to the eyes.

As long as nothing arises to request more details of that (actual) tree, we will continue to relate to the image that the brain produced.

Scientists have recently determined that it takes approximately 400 repetitions to create a new synapse in the brain, that is unless it is done with play, in which case, it takes between 10 & 20 repetitions!"

\*Dr Karyn Purvis\*

*A useful meme..*

A feeling is a sensation plus a thought story.

What is story and what is actual?



Referring back to the [Predictive Brain story](#), what was actual was the seeing of colors that stimulated the brain to produce the tree image, and the image itself. (notice i'm not saying that the tree itself is actual)

Now we will go deeper and investigate what a story is, and we look at what being actual really is. (from the perspective of the organism)

At a gross level, if we ask what a story is, we get something like “It’s a narrative” or “it’s a thought stream”.

If we look a little deeper, we see that the narrative or thought stream is about a subject.

One step further back (even deeper) and we see that these (stories) not only have a subject, but the subjects can be categorised by nature. By flavor.

..and deeper still, we see that the prevailing nature is habitual.

Now, what is it to be actual?

At the grossest level, we might say that to be actual means that something exists.

Drop a level and we ask how do we know that something exists?

We test it by seeing or touching or using any of our sense organs.

So, let’s get this straight. You test it by believing the interpretation of a perspective arrived at by your brain?

Deeper. OK, yes, I have a story that tells me that something is actual.  
Hmmm...



OK, time to break out of the head jail. – in other words, “let’s get liberated”.

Did you recognise (yet) that we have been in storyland up ’till now?

Now, we are going to accelerate the discovering of how we operate.

To do this, we will start to become aware of the two fundamental aspects of experiencing.

They are sensations and thoughts.

Everything that you experience, everybody that you experience, arises from these.

Not one, but both of them.

From here on, you will be given exercises to do.

They have a certain order. If done in that order, they will likely start to subtly alter your experiencing of THIS.

The intent of this exercise is to begin to separate (in awareness) sensations from thought.

In particular, notice any opinion (judgement) that arises about how you are going.

Did you notice the avatar at the top of the page?

Did you see a black vase or two white face profiles looking at each other?

Can you see both at once, or does focus go quickly between the two?

Investigate...

Examine what happens.

Watch what the eyes do.

Watch what thoughts say.





### **Body Exercises Head Exercise**

Let's examine the solidity of the head.

Press a finger down onto the top of the 'head'.

Notice what is actually present.

Is it a head, or is it just a sensation labelled 'pressure' and a story ABOUT a head?

Do the same with a finger on each side of the head.

Is a head actually found, or are there just sensations again?

And is there anything between the pressure points, or is it just a thought that says there must be something between them?



## **Body Exercise**

Sit with eyes closed for about 15 minutes.

Paying attention only to the pure sensations, without relying on thoughts or mental images:

Can it be known how tall the body is?

Does the body have a weight or volume?

In the actual experience does the body have a shape or a form?

Is there a boundary between the body and the clothing? Is there a boundary between the body and the chair?

Is there an inside or an outside?

If there is an inside – the inside of what exactly?

If there is an outside – the outside of what exactly?

What does the word/label ‘body’ ACTUALLY refer to?

What is the ACTUAL experience of the body?

Look very carefully, especially with the last question. Take your time, don't rush. You can look several times during the day while doing other things (like washing hands, showering, having a short break from work, walking, etc) before replying.



### **The Cup exercise..**

This exercise is designed to make apparent the difference between what we think that we see and what we actually see.

What we think that we see is usually what our minds tell us what we are seeing.

Our minds operate at a level of metaphor. That is, at a conceptual level.

This is fine for communication purposes, but at a very early age, we start to believe that this is what is actually there. IT IS NOT!

Take a cup and place it in front of you. Start looking at it and notice what thoughts are saying about what you see.

Consider the process of looking.

Are you looking for something, or at something?

Now consider the process of seeing.

Your first thoughts might be about the object that you were previously looking for, but that's not where i want you to focus. Instead, i want you to investigate the process of seeing.

Watch thoughts as you consider who is seeing. Notice what happens to seeing as you consider this. Did the seeing stop?

Go back to simply watching thoughts as you look at the cup.

After a while of watching thoughts, they will change. Disengage with the thoughts.

Focus on the colours, the textures, the shapes, notice how they are too subtle, too complex to be accurately described.

As this seeing is happening, ask yourself can there be a seer or a seen without the seeing stopping.

Try it...

Focus in the colors and textures, then as you do this, ask yourself “Who is seeing?”

Notice what happens to those colors and textures as you consider this.

Now go back to focusing on the colors and textures and this time ask yourself “What is being seen?”

Again, notice what happens to those colors and textures as you consider this.

Did you find that when the experiencing is seeing, that there is no see-er or seen?

That the who and the what only existed in thought?

When seeing stops, do you then recognise that you start relating to the concept of cup?

The concept of a cup is a story about the colors and textures and form and uses.

That it takes up space.

That it needs washing after use?

Did you discover that you weren't actually seeing it anymore.

We look at it but recognise it as a vessel to contain something. The details have vanished, but the concept of cup prevails.

We have to ignore the shading to call it white..

Ok, this (cup exercise) is worth staying with until we recognise a couple of things.

Now, I'm not saying that this is an absolute reality. It is just a particular perspective. Consider it.

In looking there is an activation of vision aimed at a mental image. i am looking for (that image) or I am looking at (a concept of an object) With seeing, I am seeing (a concept of an object) or I am seeing colors and textures and form. This is what was intended with the intense focus on the 'cup'.

When you are really intensely focused on seeing the colors, texture, etc,

then that is all there is. The (idea of) cup has disappeared. It is no longer, in this moment, an object to contain liquid for drinking. There is just seeing happening.

Then when the question (who is seeing?) is asked the intention is to recognise that seeing stops when it (the question) is considered. There is also the intention to recognise that the only possible answer is that the who, is mind stuff.

How accurately could you describe it to somebody that wasn't seeing it?

Look at the picture of this car on the next page

In casual conversation we would describe it as white, but it is obvious that this ignores the variations of that color that is induced by our perspective and the lighting conditions.

How different is the color where the number 1 is to where the number 2 is?

Yet we know if we were to shine a light from where we are looking that this will change.

Does this tell you that what is perceived happens in us and not 'out there'?









## **Do you have a body?**

Remember, everything we are doing here is about the relative, not the absolute.

Another way to say this is that it is all from the perspective of experience. This is an extension of the [cup exercise](#).

The purpose is to reinforce awareness of the difference between what can be experienced through the 5 physical senses and what is experienced as a response to what is imagined.

..is the body just a concept?

Please find a quiet place and a quiet time.

Sit or lay down, Close your eyes and relax.

Now attend to sensations exclusively?

Pay no attention to thought babbling about this and that?

Dismiss thought labelling sensation for a bit?

Thought may tell: “I am lying here” or “My body is lying here” or “A body is lying here”.

Can this be known from pure sensation?, or is that a mental conclusion.

Thought might suggest: “There is a soft pressure against the back”.

But can you know about “pressure” or “back” from pure sensation?

Once arrived there, while ONLY attending to sensation, please have a look at the following:

Can it be known how tall the body is?

Do sensations specify size, shape or weight?

How many toes are there?

Deeper Body Investigation

Here is an even deeper investigation of the body.

Please follow each step, don't leave out any. Take your time.

Don't move to the next step until the previous one is clearly seen.

Repeat the exercise several times.

Stand in front of a bigger mirror.

(1) First, close the eyes and feel the sensations labelled 'body'.

(2) Then open the eyes and look into the mirror while still paying attention to the sensations.

Is there any connection between the felt sensations and the image in the mirror? Or just thoughts (and/or mental images) suggest that there is?

(3) While still paying attention to the sensations move one hand and observe the movement from the mirror.

Is there any connection between the felt sensations (labelled 'hand') and image of movement in the mirror?

(4) Now do the same movement with the hand, but this time look at the hand directly, not from the mirror.

Is there any connection between the felt sensations (labelled 'hand') and the image 'of movement'? Or only thoughts suggest it?

(5) Now, pay attention only to the image in the mirror.

Does the image by itself suggest in any way that is 'you' or 'your body'?

Does the image itself suggest in any way that it is a 'body' at all?

..or are there only colours and shapes?

(6) Where the mirror ends, some parts of the body (probably legs) cannot be seen.

Just by the image in the mirror, is there any 'knowledge' that there must be legs, or only thoughts and mental images suggest so?

(7) Now turn away from the mirror and look forward (don't look directly to any body parts).

Is there a 'body' anywhere when all thoughts and images are ignored, or are there only sensations?

(8) Start to walk slowly.

Is there a 'body walking', or are there only sensations?

Is there actual experience of 'walking' at all?

Or just THOUGHTS ABOUT 'walking'?

Can such a thing as 'body' be found OR just THOUGHTS ABOUT a 'body'? Can such a thing as 'walking' be found?

(9) Without moving, how do you know that you have a back to your head?

Is it a mental conclusion based on memory or what you have been told or read?



## What is Selfing?

So let's introduce another concept here that's useful.

That is the concept of selfing.

We can be triggered by circumstances and something like a little explosion happens and we'll start selfing. Right?

The way I see self is it's armor.

It's literally body armor.

It's it's a protection, a defense if you like.

You get into defensive mode.

That's what all of the stories are about.

So when we get triggered by something, we're almost inevitably going to do what I call selfing. We're going to be – everything is going to be from the perspective of an actual self.

It is when a belief that there is an inherently independent self is expressed.

It is usually an automatic expression.

It might be just thinking or saying "This thing is mine" or "I like such and such"





### **Sight-Sensation Correlation Exercise**

Close the eyes and hold up one hand.

Pay attention only to the felt sensations ‘of the hand’.

Open the eyes, and now observe the hand by looking only.

While looking at the hand, pay attention to the felt sensations.

Repeat this as many times as needed and be really curious.

Normally we believe that the sensation is coming from the sight, the ‘object’ seen as hand, but if you look, is there any link between the sensation and the sight?

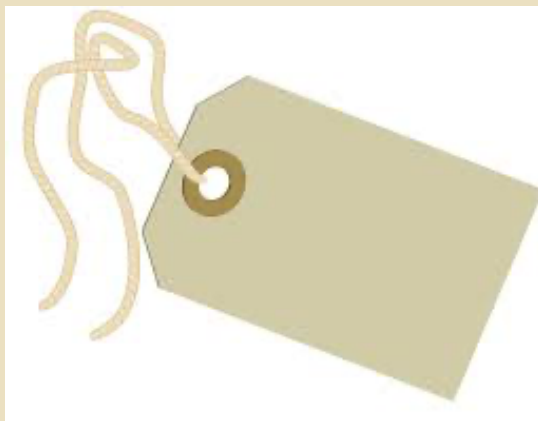
In other words, is the sensation ‘coming from’ the sight labelled as hand or only thoughts and mental constructs link them?

Can you see that both the ‘visual sight’ and the sensation appear simultaneously but ‘separately’, meaning that none of them is coming from the other or contained by the other?

So they just appear equally, ‘beside’ each other without any hierarchy or link between them?

You can repeat the exercise with some other body part.

## LABELS



### “I” labelling

Get a sheet of paper and draw a line that divides that sheet in half. Label one half ‘self’ and the other side ‘other’. Sit down and start a timer for 5 minutes. Every time you have a thought make a mark on the sheet. If that thought is about the self put a mark on the self side, if it’s about something else, mark the other side. If a thought about food occurs due to feeling hungry, mark that on the self side. Any thought that refers back to a self should go on the self side. (I’m bored, I’m tired, is the door locked (my safety) that video was funny (I was amused), my back hurts, I am frightened) get it?

Beneath Labels Go to the level, to the depth where labelling the sensations, don’t work. The sensations are too indescribable. The subtlety of them, the variability of them, it can’t be put into words. To say you feel a contraction, that’s a concept that we’re using to describe what’s actually going on. To say, “I feel”, this is just a concept. So when you get into those feelings, just get to the level where there is just sensory input. Sensation is a tactile input, but it’s too subtle to describe. Get down to that level of sensation where labels don’t do it justice and what you’ll find is that you’re way out of your thoughts. The instant you start to do that, you wont be in that thought loop.



## **Actual/Direct experience-ing..**

### **Apple exercise**

Have a look at an apple. If you have a ‘real’ apple, you can use it for this exercise.

When looking at an apple, there’s colour, texture, shape and a thought saying ‘apple’: and maybe a thought saying, “I’m looking at an apple.”

What is known for sure?

Colour is known and thoughts are known.

What about the content of thoughts, what do they describe?

Actual experience does not refer to the content of thoughts. What it is ABOUT, because that is only just more thought.

Actual experience is sound, thought, colour, smell, taste, sensation.

Is there really an ‘apple’ here, or only colour and a thought ABOUT ‘apple’? Can ‘apple’ be found in actual experience?

While these thoughts are known, what they talk ABOUT can’t be found in actual experience.

This is what is meant by ‘looking in actual experience ‘. What you know for sure, and, is always here.

Taste labelled ‘apple’ is known

Colour labelled ‘apple’ is known

Sensation labelled ‘apple’ is known (when apple is touched)

Smell labelled ‘apple’ is known

Thought about/of an ‘apple’ is known

However, is an apple actually known?

**Decisions, Choices &**



**Control Exercises**

### **Palm Flipping Exercise**

Hold a hand in front of you: palm turned down.

Now turn the palm up. And down...and up and so on.

Watch like a hawk.

Don't go to thoughts – examine your direct experience. Do this as many times as you like, and each time inquire:-

How is the movement controlled?

Does a thought control it?

Can a 'controller' of any description be located?

How is the decision made to turn the hand over? Track any decision point when a thought MADE THE DECISION to turn the hand over and the hand turns over immediately.

Who or what chose which hand – the left or right hand for the exercise?

Can you find a separate individual or anything that is choosing when to turn the palm up or down?

### **Raising Hand Exercise**

Place both hands on a table in front of you, palms down.

When you have done that, rest for a moment and then raise one hand in the air but not the other.

Don't go to thoughts, examine your direct experience. Do this as many times as you like, and each time inquire:-

What is it exactly that is choosing which hand to raise?

Can you find a separate individual or anything that is doing the choosing?

What is it that is controlling the hand?

Can a 'controller' of any description be located?

Can anything be found that makes the hand move?

How is the decision made?

Not Victim So this idea of I'm at the mercy of whatever goes on sounds like you could easily get into a disastrous situation. But it hasn't happened. So although you were never in control. Here you are. So the idea that if I'm not in control things are going to get really bad. That's just a stupid story. So you're not giving up something that you had. What you're doing is recognizing what was always the case. You're not going from being in control to not being in control. You were never in control. And yet everything's worked out.



## Stream Exercise

Imagine for a moment a scene, one of a little mountain stream which is tumbling down a hillside gully, not far from its source. It has been raining and so the level is quite high. Consider in your mind's eye, if you can, how it flows to the right over a little rock (where, had the level been lower, it would probably have gone around the rock), then the flow goes to the left over a tree bow, and then slows a little in a broader place, before splashing over a small cascade into a pool, and so on down the mountain side. Does it choose any of its directions? Is it even really a separate entity different from the water deposited in it, the rocks, the depressions in the ground etc? Is it even the same entity moment by moment, or more the product of weather conditions and water, like an ever-changing pattern?

Can you find anywhere where 'insert name' autonomously intervenes into life, choosing something that is not the product of all the elements: that is not a part of the overall flow?

Now please consider a regular decision made eg: what to wear in the morning, or what to eat for lunch, and describe to me what happens.

There are environmental factors, there are colour preferences (but where did those come from – any autonomous intervention there perhaps?), practical issues (such as what is available), available time for preparation, purpose (eg: need to fill up for the day, or to look hip and cool for that person!) etc. Where in there is an autonomous entity intervening in the flow of life? Can you find someone somewhere?

Can anything be found for which 'insert name' is responsible – if so responsible to what and for what?

## **Drink Exercise**

The aim of the following exercise is to discover whether the function of choice can really be found or confirmed in actual experience. The idea of making ‘choices‘ is a very clear example of a function that we wrongly identify as the basis of our identity.

Here’s what’s needed – a chair, a table and two different drinks. Any two drinks you like are okay for this: coffee, tea, milk, water, juices, smoothies, beer, wine, etc.

Preparation – Place the two drinks side by side on the table in front of you, sit comfortably on the chair and mentally label them as drink A and drink B.

## **Experiment – Finding the function of choice**

Sit for a few moments, take a few relaxed breaths and let the dust settle.

When you feel ready:

Look at drink A and at drink B. Think about their respective qualities, the things you like about them, compare and weigh the pros and cons of each. See if a preference is manifesting for one or the other.

Count to 5.

Choose one of the drinks. Pick it up and take a sip.

### **Questions:**

Remember that we're looking for some kind of function, a something, an 'I' which is doing the 'choosing'.

In step 1 when thinking about their respective qualities, did you 'choose' the qualities? Or did they kind of appear by themselves? If some preferences manifested, did you 'choose' these preferences? Or did they just pop up by themselves?

In step 2 when you counted to 5, if the preferences took the back seat while the numbers took the front seat, did you 'choose' this sequence of event? Did you 'choose' to shut down the preferences to give way to the counting? Did you directly experience a mental function or faculty doing the 'choosing'? Have you seen this function in action?

In step 3 where you made a choice, did you actually witness or directly experience a mental function or faculty doing the 'choosing'? Did anything arise that announced, 'I am the chooser'? If so, what does this function look like?

Sometimes we describe this sense of choosing as a 'feeling': It feels like 'I' did the 'choosing'. But the question is, can a feeling 'choose'? Is it in the nature of a feeling to 'choose'?

## **Food Choice**

So taking a closer look, is it that these voices (thoughts) are controlling these behaviours in any way? Try this out.

Get two foods you like, one that is a 'bad' food, like a piece of chocolate and the other a 'good food,' like a piece of apple. Thoughts might come up while looking at them saying stuff about eating one or the other.

Eventually one of them will get eaten first.

Look carefully for any evidence in direct experience to see if those thoughts controlled the behaviour: rather than just guessing and commentating what might happen.

Conditions Yeah, that that intention is also not in the vacuum. It doesn't happen in a vacuum. No, well, it's also a result of causes and conditions. So so causes cause and effect is a really simple. notion. We have this idea that one or two things can cause something else to happen. But as soon as you investigate it, you realize that in fact that there's a million things involved. Infinite number of things. In fact, everything that's ever happened in the world since the beginning of existence had to be exactly the way it is for any happening to happen.

## Simple Individual Exercises

Can you see a self making you leave the bed?

Where does the “decision”, the “command” to get up come from? What makes the body get up? Does a ‘you’ or a thought command the body? It’s always interesting to see the difference between thought content and what really happens.

“Can you see a self making the body leave the bed?”

‘On a count of 5, raise either your left or right arm, or not.’ Dead simple.

Can you choose to fall asleep? Can you find the moment / point / spot or realm where you choose to fall asleep?

Can you choose the very content of the next thought? Can you choose willingly the next thought that will arise?

Can you choose the very quality (tightness, openness, vibration, hardness, contraction etc) of the physical sensation, that will arise next?

Can you choose the next emotion, mind state, attitude that will arise? Sit and look at what is happening. Can you find any choice – point where you willingly chose any emotion that appeared in response to a stimulus?

Think of a number between 1 and 20. Try to notice the exact point when the choice is made. Did you know what number would be chosen before it appeared?

8.

Close your eyes and sit quietly for 10-15 minutes. Watch what focus does. Focus on focussing, watch attention itself. Do you move it? Or it moves by itself? Hold focus on

Ask the client to go to another room, pick a random object and bring it back to the

computer. Ask questions to why they decided to choose that object.

breath. See how it moves to thoughts, sensations, feelings, sounds. Is this something you control?

What moves attention? Is thinking in control of attention? Describe what you see.



## **Doership Exercise**

Although you see that there is no noticer/observer/witness, there may still be the feeling of identification of being the 'doer'. That it still 'feels' like there is a self that is the 'chooser'. So let's have a look at this as it has to do with the sense of seeing.

Take a few relaxed breaths to let the dust settle for a while, and then:

Look on your right.

Then look on your left.

Finally, bring your head back to centre, close your eyes and look in front.

Okay, so when you look on the right, the view on the right is seen (whatever that is).

When you look on the left, the view on the left is seen (whatever that is).

And then, when you look in front of you with eyes closed, the view in front is seen (ie 'black space').

So, when the view on the right is seen, do you have the 'choice' not to see? I'm not asking can you 'choose' to see something else like another view or 'black space' if you close your eyes. The question is: can you turn seeing off? Can you NOT see what is seen?

Same thing with the view on the left, can you NOT see the view on the left?

Same thing with the view in front with closed eyes, can you NOT see the 'black space'? Can you turn off seeing?

What did the 'chooser' choose? Did a 'self' choose something?

If you are unable to choose what you're aware of, then what else is there to choose?

## **Witness/Observer/Senses Exercise**

### Seeing Exercise – Part I

The usual belief that ‘I am this body’ is usually tied in with the belief that the body as a separate item is responsible or ‘DOING’ the senses – ‘I see’, ‘I hear’, ‘I feel’ etc

We will begin with ‘seeing’ – Just that one sense on its own.

Close your eyes.

With eyes closed, you will now experience ‘blackness’. There may be other things you can find going on, sure. If you are looking at a bright light, there may be a red glow. There may be sparkly bits or cloudy flecks appearing and disappearing – It really doesn’t matter about the specifics. Just to make things simple, whatever you can see with eyes closed, I’m going to refer to it as ‘black’ or ‘blackness’ just for simplicity.

- 1) With eyes closed, can you confirm that what is experienced is ‘blackness’ as I mentioned?
- 2) Is there anything else in ‘seeing’ other than ‘blackness’?
- 3) Can what is witnessing the blackness be found?
- 4) Can a pair of eyes, an ‘I’ / ‘me’, a person be found that is witnessing the blackness? Or is there just ‘blackness’ to be found?

What do you find?

Can an INHERENT SEE-ER be found? Would anything that is suggested as the see-er, be anything other than a concept/idea/thought?

### Seeing Exercise – Part II

Let’s move on to opening the eyes now.

Again, address this very simply – The ‘seeing’ sense only for the moment. With eyes open, a world of objects appears . . . a room . . . a computer screen etc

What you can specifically see isn’t of interest here, and whatever it is, I am simply going to refer to it as ‘what can be seen’.

This might be a little more tricky, but give it some consideration.

1) With eyes open, can you confirm that what is experienced is 'what can be seen' as I mentioned?

2) Is there anything else in 'seeing' other than 'what can be seen'?

3) Can what is witnessing 'what can be seen' be found?

4) Can a pair of eyes, an 'I' / 'me', be found that is witnessing 'what can be seen'? Or is there just simply 'what can be seen' to be found?

What do you find?

Can an INHERENT SEE-ER be found? Would anything that is suggested as the see-er, be anything other than a concept/idea/thought?

## **Label-Reality Correlation**

There is a belief that labels have a one-to-one correspondence with something called “reality.”

But there isn't.

Just like it is a generally accepted belief that labels like “good” and “bad” are inherent characteristics of “things.”

But actually, they are not.

When you look at the word label ‘BLACK’, what is the actual experience?

Is the blue color “experienced” or is color black “experienced” as the label suggests?

Do the labels have a one-to-one correspondence with “reality?”

Or do the labels suggest something else other than what is here now (blue color)?

Is black-ness an inherent attribute of the “experience” of the blue color: or is black just a word label on the experience of the blue color?

If the label ‘BLACK’ is replaced with the label ‘GOOD’ or ‘BAD’, is the redness affected in any way as the labels suggests?

“Does blackness become “good” or “bad,” or do the labels have no effect whatsoever on reality?”

## **SUMMARY** (so far)

To Summarise..

i would hope that by the time you reach here, that it is clear what the difference is between direct experience and concept and that you recognise the illusory nature of an inherently independent self, running the show.

That you realize that choice, decision, control only exist as a mental construct overlaying an existing happening.

It may also be, that the seeking urge has gone AWOL.

That the urge to read or watch a video of some enlightened being has also diminished.



## What comes next?

If the above sits well with you, then you have discovered ‘stream entry’, or passed through the ‘gateless gate’ (to use some common descriptions) This signifies the beginning of an endless journey.

Now there is a lifetime of habitual and conditioned reflexes to eliminate. These may be simply unexamined responding to that which hasn’t yet been triggered, or they may be embedded trauma based responses that have been avoided.

If it is the first, then simply being attuned to the more subtle cues will show you where to look.

These are simply unexamined areas of identification, and once seen will dissipate.

If this is appropriate then i recommend the [Fetter work](#).

On the other hand, if they keep coming back and don’t dissipate when recognised, then they are likely the result of embedded trauma.

This happens (usually) when as a child we don’t have the capability to put what is happening into a perspective that doesn’t impact us deeply.

My story about this is that it is beyond the intellectual capacity of the child to cope and so it gets ‘remembered’ by the body. It becomes a cellular memory which produces a fear response whenever it is approached. Of course there are many variations to this.

This is referred to as “[shadow](#)” stuff.



## Shadow work

When there are just remnants of identification that get triggered, they don't evoke fear when investigated. There is more likely an "Oh, that's what is behind that reaction." kind of response and they will likely not appear again unless the underlying belief is not fully seen through.

On the other hand, if the toxic starting point for the trigger is based on something more fundamental than habit, then

- A. they will reoccur repeatedly, and
- B. they will evoke a fear response when their toxic starting point is approached.

Many modern seekers also deal with emotional content, suppressed trauma, and thought loops patterns that are centered around rejecting emotional experience in the body.

Overall, the topic of shadow work.

As we debunk many of the current delusions such as the existence of a separate self, the idea of choice and control etc, we are dealing with beliefs.

Conditioned ideas that are taken by most of society as actual. Beneath all of this is stuff that does not have verbal expression.

It is often trauma based.

Now, every kid suffers trauma. From being scolded to suffering corporal punishment. (or worse)

In most cases, the powerless child has no option but to internalize it.

As a survival tool, the body memorises and holds in contraction, that which had no expression. Sometimes these things can inhibit early realisations. Sometimes they don't manifest until well into the 'journey.

One of the main characteristic of the existence of 'shadow' stuff is avoidance.

Avoidance manifests as distraction when this stuff is first approached.

As we move in the direction of examining what provoked a trigger, we will either get seduced away by thoughts or some activity will appear to be immediately required.

This avoidance stops us from getting close enough to experience fear.

If, on the other hand, we recognise the avoidance behaviour and continue with the investigation, then fear is likely to be the next avoidance block encountered.

## **Q: How do we investigate this stuff?**

A: You may remember that back on the [thoughts page](#), I mentioned a meme that said that a feeling is a sensation with stories attached.

This is how we investigate what is triggering about this.

You start by asking (yourself) what are you feeling and where are you feeling it.

The answers will almost certainly be a production of [labels](#).

“Tightness (label) in the chest (label)” is an example.

The next step is to examine what are the details of “tightness” and be more specific about just what area of the chest is the feeling felt.

There will be many subtle details that are revealed as we get more intimate with the sensation.

Because we don’t need to communicate this, we also don’t need to fit the experience into words.

In fact words are simply inadequate to describe the subtleties of the experiencing.

At this point we are focusing on sensations. What is it. Where is it. What it is like. How it changes. Does it shift.

Stories, in the form of thoughts will appear, but we won’t engage with them.

Notice them but push them into the background. Keep getting closer and more intimate with the sensations.

At this point thought stories might get really insistent and the urge to do something might become overwhelming.

Recognizing this as avoidance will help you penetrate any fear that might be coming up.



Staying with the sensation, you will likely find that it is changing. Shifting and morphing.

Getting really intimate with it, you will likely find that it dissipates, but it will be replaced by other feelings (sensations plus stories)

Of course, everybody is different and will have their own version of this.

Another generalization of this is that fear will often give way to terror and this will sit on top of shame, which in turn will reveal guilt.

..and further this will be something learned when we were very young.

The reason that we (often) don't remember this (until we start investigating) is that it is so painful that the repression of it means that it is held in the body. The mind rejects it completely.

Sometimes this is the consequence of a single incident, but way more common is that it is repeated conditioning.

An example is: "you can't do anything right" being told frequently for years results in a feeling of unworthiness or incompetence.

## **DIVERSION**

What we can assume is that the desire to eat or whatever it is, that is a diversion from something we don't want to feel. And that something is undefinable because it has the potential to be catastrophic. At some unexamined level, and it was very likely was potentially catastrophic as an eight-year-old's without the resources to cope with a lot of things that a much



older person does have, a much more experienced person. So that fear of what might happen, it never gets examined because we're always succumbing to the behaviour that takes us away from it, that we use to avoid it, that behaviour being the desire for food or eating. That we can believe that presumption will prove to be right frequently, it may not always be right, I don't know. So what we're saying is that what we've got is an organism that's burdened with a particular kind of maladaptive behaviour. It doesn't work out well for us to have that behaviour. It's better if we didn't health-wise and every which way I guess. But of course, to drop it means that we change. We become a different person. And ego. I'll define, I'll talk about ego at the moment. But ego is... It is the self on on defence duty, so to speak. So it's stories that we believe that a crucial, or at least seem crucial to our feeling of wellbeing. Right. So we want to see ourselves in a certain way in order to feel okay. And we'll do pretty much anything in order to keep seeing ourselves in that way. That's, you know, that's really part of what we're changing with this. The self view becomes different. and consequently the responding that we do is different and so on. Yeah. So, anything, anything you think, whatever the mind brings to the table, is a diversion. You know, in a good, bad, indifferent, anything, whatever it is that the mind brings to the table, is an invitation down the yellow brick road. You know, it's an invitation for an adventure that is created every time. And that's not to say that it's inevitably bad that that happens because that's everything. That's all that happens. There's no

escaping that we spend our whole waking time and the considerable part of our sleep time simply responding to conditions in a way to maintain a particular story about ourselves. Crazy, absolutely crazy stuff. But yeah, that's what we do. So when you consider that whatever your mind brings to the table is a diversion away from what you are feeling, it's easy to get the idea that that's wrong. But that's not wrong. That's okay. That's what happens. Well, by the time you realise it's happened, it's already finished. It's already done. Yeah. So, if you can just recognise that no matter what you bring to the table about that is only about that. It can't be changed. It's additional to it. It's a post-it note that you put on reality. Whatever it is that's about, it is a post-it note. It's just surplus. But what it will do is it will add certain conditions that produce your next experience. And you can see fairly easily, imagine, that it's not going to add conditions that are good. It's just going to corrupt it in some way. It's going to complicate it. It's going to influence it.

I think that you and I have something that is a bit uncommon and that is that we are more inclined to take what real life offers us as the meat to work with, with this stuff, rather than generate it and take it to the laboratory, so to speak, as a way of doing it. You don't need what I've suggested before. It kind of does sound like lab work, and it probably is as a preparation for the dynamism that comes with real life stuff, because you get plenty of it. Real life stuff gives it to you all the time, you know. Every time you have a fantasy about doing something or not doing something, know, you're well

and truly in it. There's stuff to work with. That's great. and then there's language again. say stuff to work with, but for me it's stuff to play with. I just love playing with it. How I respond to it. And you know, for a while, I've been really looking forward to somebody walking up to me and abusing me or I would love to have that happen. It has happened a couple of times in my life, but last time it happened, I got sucked into it so swiftly and so much that it was, I was agitated for a couple of hours. It was a stand-up yelling match with an asshole of a neighbour. But then he moved and I've got no one to do it with anymore, but I'd love it to happen just to see how I respond. I think that you and I have something that is a bit uncommon and that is that we are more inclined to take what real life offers us as the meat to work with, with this stuff, rather than generate it and take it to the laboratory, so to speak, as a way of doing it. You don't need what I've suggested before. It kind of does sound like lab work, and it probably is as a preparation for the dynamism that comes with real life stuff, because you get plenty of it. Real life stuff gives it to you all the time, you know. Every time you have a fantasy about doing something or not doing something, know, you're well and truly in it. There's stuff to work with. That's great. and then there's language again. say stuff to work with, but for me it's stuff to play with. I just love playing with it. How I respond to it. And you know, for a while, I've been really looking forward to somebody walking up to me and abusing me or I would love to have that happen. It has happened a couple of times in my life, but last time it

happened, I got sucked into it so swiftly and so much that it was, I was agitated for a couple of hours. It was a stand-up yelling match with an asshole of a neighbour. But then he moved and I've got no one to do it with anymore, but I'd love it to happen just to see how I respond.

# The FETTERS

Before we get into the fetters, I want to make it perfectly clear that these are a conceptual tool to help find more subtle identifications.

They are not meant to be a workbook for you to complete.

If you're interested in working with the fetters, I suggest strongly that you get a guide who has themselves been through them. My personal preference would be to go with Pernille Damore.

<https://www.youtube.com/@TheAwakeningCurriculum>

I also want to pay homage to:

Steffi

<https://stromeintritt.org/en>

Kevin Shanilec

<https://www.simplytheseen.com>

Angelo Dilullo

<http://www.youtube.com/@SimplyAlwaysAwake>

Christiane Michelberger

<https://www.unterwegsmitbuddha.de>

[\(in German, translation available\)](#)



1. Self- view
2. Doubt and perplexity
3. Attachment to rites and rituals
4. Desire
5. Ill will
6. Subjectivity and form
7. Perceiving and something-ness
8. The notion “I Am” or “I Exist”
9. Restlessness and compensation
10. Not knowing

\_\_..or, a slightly more descriptive version of 6 up.

Fixation regarding form

Fixation regarding the formless

Conceit/over-estimation that “I Exist” /

Restlessness and compensation

Ignorance.

The Fetter model is Buddhist in origin.

It provides a road map for where to look. It also provides a sequence, some of which doesn't matter and some that does. (more on this later)

There is some hope that by the time you are reading this that the first and second fetter have fallen.

Often the third will spontaneously dissolve too.

i want to interject here, something that might better belong on the expectations page. ...and that is that just because an incident of 'selfing' or identification occurs, it doesn't mean that you have lost it.

Because of the nature of habit, we will (most likely) continue to get triggered from time to time.

Each one of these is an opportunity. Welcome it.

The first fetter is the portal, the doorway through which we enter the spiritual journey. (These are metaphors of course, as it's not a journey or a path)

Before going through this "gateless gate" there is seeking.

Something is known, and that something is that this 'direction' has promise.

It is possible to pass through this portal by oneself, but rare.

Most people that have 'stream entry' do so with the help of a guide.

That is someone who has themselves realised that which is a beginning of the endless 'journey'.

This whole website (apart from Shadow stuff) up to this point is about the first fether. (So this can be seen as a recap or summary of that)

The first fether is broken when the *recognition* of the delusion under which we have been living happens.

That delusion can be summarised as the belief that much of what we took to be real is actually theoretical.

The most glaring one, and the one focused on mostly is that there is an actual, inherently separate self running the show.

There are many ancillary delusions associated with this one, like choice, decisions, control etc.

That *recognition* is key. It has to be a discovery to actually grok this.

That's what everything up to this point is about. Getting onto the path (it's not a path) is the hardest.

Once there, you have the tools to keep going.

This section on the Fetters is meant as a description, rather than a work book.

..and here a warning: The fetters are nothing more than a structured way of examining, investigating our experiencing.

They are a concept.

They are no more real than a self is.

When the first fetter is broken, we can clearly see the conceptual nature of the identity that we call a self.

That same conceptual nature is revealed in lots of ‘things’ that we previously took to be real.

We have debunked the veracity of thoughts and recognised that who we thought we were is a collection of thoughts.

Further, we have recognised that just as we respond to any of the five physical senses, that we respond to thought stories.

This leads to a SENSE of self that fuels the second fetter. Doubt.

## FETTER 2

Doubt is the second fetter. It almost always shows up after the self is converted from a delusion into an illusion. It's a continuation of expectations. "it can't be this easy" or "This is too ordinary" are some of the thoughts that accompany the uncomfortable sensations.

Doubts are always the result of believing thoughts. One of the best ways to 'weather' them is to go to the only thing that is actual, and that is experiencing. What is happening in the body NOW?

It is useful here to consider if the doubt is actually doubt that a self exists or if it is doubt whether we are really awake.

It is experienced as a feeling of confusion about the veracity of a story.

This is not the 'place' to work through doubt. It is just ABOUT it. (More concepts) but here is something to consider:

i can report that every time these descriptors (awakened/liberated) are used, they are accompanied by the question about whether there is a sense of specialness or superiority.

Whether or not a 'shift' has occurred is not a matter of opinion, but *to consider it* is to enter storyland.



Now, this is a big one... Story is a companion to every experience, and (almost) every experience is a response to story.

Among the many seekers that i have worked with, there have been some that i would describe as awake in every way but one. That is that they didn't believe that they are.

Consequently, they were responding to a different story, so, many of the new behaviours that would have been instilled by the brain rewiring was eluding them.

What are the criteria that determine if a 'shift' has happened? (rhetorical question) Well, most people would like to have had an epiphany-type experience. They see bells and whistles as proof that it has happened, but for many, it doesn't happen this way.

There was also a belief in seekers, that if we were to 'awaken', that these things would change instantly and completely.

The stories of perpetual bliss, may or may not be true. They are certainly not experienced here, nor in anybody that i have related to.

There was a time when it was believed that the stories about ourselves were actual. That we were in control.

That truth was a thing. That we were inherently good or bad.

If, **on reflection**, these things are recognised as a fallacy, if they are recognised to be illusions, then a 'shift' has happened.

There is the need for this to be an experiential shift. Not just intellectual. What does that mean?

The intellectual recognitions are usually accompanied by an experiential component, but without doubt, it takes time to re-condition many years of habitual responding.

If there is a feeling component to the recognition of the illusions, then behaviour changes. Responses to the illusions when they present, become different.

Knowing that we don't have control over everything that happens means that we don't beat ourselves up over a perceived failure. We don't deny the consequences of it, but neither do we dwell on how it could/should have been. We move on quickly.

Can you see how carrying a story that you are not there yet, inhibits this experiential component from happening ?

This is not to say "fake it until you make it." You only have to ask yourself "do you actually grok the nature of the illusions?"

If you honestly do, then be open to the behavioural changes, the consequences of Seeing what is actual and what is story.

**The following (in white) is with grateful acknowledgement to Pernille Damore**

**<https://www.youtube.com/@TheAwakeningCurriculum>**

In the Buddhist text, as in life, doubt is often referred to as something we experience about our actions:

Am I am doing the right thing?

Is this the path for me?

Is this useful information for me?

That is one level of doubt: the skeptical doubt.

Another level of doubt is the internal doubt.

That is usually happening in comparison to either our own expectations, or to our assumptions of other people's experiences.

All through the lessons in this fether, we will circle back to that, since the foundation of that underlying belief is often about what we call "The Emotional Indicators": Fear, Anger, Guilt and Shame.

The underlying belief is created from one of the emotional indicators, and creates a felt sensation of a push/pull of doubt.

That sensation is easily transferrable to basically any other sensation of doubt you experience in your life.

The underlying emotional indicator is usually the same, the push/pull is usually the same, and the sensation of being paralysed is usually the same.

Just because the doubt circles around different topics, does not make it another type of doubt!

We are not that complex as human beings.

Doubt is doubt!

It is only the overlay of Ego chatter that makes you believe that “this is one thing, and that is something completely different!”

If you really feel into the sensations in the body, you very quickly discover that the underlying emotional indicator is the same, the push/pull is the same, and doubt is doubt.

In the Buddhist suttas, doubt is compared to a puddle of water filled with mud, which is a beautiful metaphor.

If you imagine a puddle filled with mud, you will see that there are parts of the puddle where the mud is extra thick, and that makes that part of the puddle extra dark.



If you were to look into that part of the puddle, there would be no accurate reflection: neither of you looking into the puddle, nor of anything else surrounding the puddle.

Because there is a lack of light, what is looked into is obscured, and that is what it feels like to be sitting in a place of doubt.

You are in that state of “no light” that is locking you into a kind of paralysis.

You feel stuck in your track. Your mind is circling around in the same topic of non-ability which (in the Buddhist suttas) is often compared to you being lost in a forest and forgetting your way back.

When you are in that paralysed state of doubt, you forget all that you have heard.

You forget everything you knew until this point.

And it is often almost like the more years of seeking you have, the more you forget!

That sense of paralysis is very similar to what is experienced by someone with anxiety.

There is no movement.

You cant move forward, because you are not sure where to go. And you most definitely are not going back!

So you feel frozen in time.

Because of the thick mud with no light entering, there is no clarity brought to you at any point.

The more you fight to solve the doubt, the more you are stirring up the mud in the puddle, and the more obscured your clarity will become.

So the antidote to doubt is Calm.

You need to calm down!

If this is where you are, then you need to stop fighting.

You need to breathe.

Stay here.

Breathe deeply, and see if you can find a spot in your body right now that feels calm.

You will not find that calm in the mind, so don't even bother looking there.

Right now your mind is in a state of misdirection and confusion.

Your mind does not know which way to go.

It is not functioning in an optimal way since it is overactive, and overreacting on a complete overload.

So don't even bother trying to find calm in your thoughts.

Do not try to stop the mind chatter.

Let it be.

Can you be in a body where the mind is confused and grasping, while your attention and focus is in finding a calm spot in your body?

Breathe, stay here.

Where in your body do you find calm right now?

Are your hands relaxed?

Can you focus on relaxed hands while the mind chatter is still going on?

Take a deep breath.

Feel how your belly gets bigger as your diaphragm expands when you inhale, and feel how it relaxes when you exhale.

Are there parts of your belly that are without tension?

How about your thighs?

You will find that there will be parts of your thighs that are tense, but there will also be parts of them that are relaxed.

Do you feel that?

What we are doing now is allowing tension to be there alongside with calm and relaxation.

The same goes for your mind.

You can allow your mind to have racing thoughts, grasping thoughts, critical thoughts, while you are still capable of breathing and finding calm in the physical body.

They are only assumptions that are letting you believe that calm needs to be any different than it is right now.

That is not truth.

Because clearly this is what is happening right now

And what is happening right now is never what the mind believes it should be like.

For some people, pointing like this can produce an image of a head separated from a body.

That is fine.

It simply reminds you that two opposite experiences can be present alongside one another, without either of them needing to change, or be any different than they are.

By doing that you are slowly expanding your acceptance, compassion and love to what is.

You will soon find out that the calm that dissolves doubt is exactly about acceptance, compassion and love.

So let's just go back to the mind formations while you stay in the calm body right now.



Do you see that a lot of the thoughts happening, in the overactive mind, are based in wrong views?

A wrong view is a mistaken assumption, or a deluded understanding, that directly leads to experiences of suffering.

So a wrong view is basically any thought that does not make you smile and feel content, connected and present in life.

Let's just go back to the muddy puddle analogy. The muddy water needs to settle.

All the sticky, clingy mud needs to slowly settle and drop to the bottom for the water to become clear.

It is the same with your mind endlessly circling on the topics of doubt.

You have to leave it!

You have to bring your focus to something else, and what you will find is that bringing your focus to the calm in your body, and allowing what is to be, will let the muddy water settle on its own.

If you keep experiencing thoughts that are products of assumptions about something that consistently makes you feel sad, concerned, or in despair, then how are you ever going to feel anything but that?

It is not like all those concerned and confused thoughts have ever led you to something productive throughout your life. It is not in their nature!

The job of doubt is not to find a solution for you.

Doubts fulfil their job description perfectly by maintaining more doubts. Doubt thoughts are self-replicating and self-promoting.

A thought of despair will leave you with a sensation of despair.

A confused thought will leave you with a sensation of confusion.

And those sensations in the body will lead to more associated thoughts, thus creating an ongoing feedback loop of painful paralysis.

The thoughts simply do what they are supposed to do. So you have to leave them. You have to leave the sticky clingy muddy thoughts.

Trust and find calm.

Calm down.

Calm down.

Nothing will fall apart by you taking a few minutes without focusing on your doubtful thoughts!

You can allow your body to just calm down.

You will find calm in a more sustainable manner than what we are doing right now, by creating a serenity practice that works with where you are, in the moment.

At first you will experience a sporadic clarity which is so much better than before.

Secondly, you will discover that doubt will dissolve itself if you just leave it.

Remember that doubt issues are dissolved, not resolved!

We work with the Fetters in pairs, and the pair that goes with the 2nd fetter of doubt, is the 10th fetter of ignorance vs wisdom.

And if you think about it, it makes perfect sense!

You need to find calm in knowing that you don't know.

Knowing that there are some things you will never know.

There are some things that are not even to BE known.

So we are moving from an ignorant person who thinks that they can know, and must know, and can understand, and can sort out situations and maintain control, to a simple spontaneously moving being who operates from a wise state of Not-Knowing.

What we are doing now is a good example of that, because doubt is confusion of the mind.

Doubt is mind-created, and by calming the mind, most of the doubting conflict is simply going to dissolve itself while you are sitting here calming the body.

Remember though, that calming the body is not done with the purpose of solving doubt!

Doubt cannot be solved, but can only ever dissolve itself. So if you have a purpose in what you are doing

right now, you just have just placed an emphasis on a topic that isn't there!

We will talk about that type of purposeful doing in the next letter.

We also want to make clear that when we are talking about you leaving the doubtful mind to be as it is, and focus on the bodily sensations, we are not talking about spiritual bypassing, or nihilism that pretends that there is nothing there to doubt in the first place.

It is not that at all!

On the contrary: we are asking you to create a lot of space for what is.

Accepting it as it is.

Leaving the doubt alone to be as it is, and that action itself will make the doubt dissolve itself all by itself.

Spiritual bypassing or gaslighting is dismissing what is here, and refusing to allow it to be here.

That is not allowing.



That is a conditional, “yeah, you may cry, but make it quick!” kind of allowing. It’s inauthentic. That inauthenticity does nothing good.

Everything you resist persists, so the only way to have issues dissolve themselves is to create space to what is, and know that you can never know how to solve them.

That is wisdom.

So if you catch yourself creating space for doubt with the purpose of having it go away as quickly as possible, then know that you are meddling.

What is normally recommended for doubt in Buddhism, and also what we bring your focus towards, are very pure serenity practices of unconditional acceptance, of loving kindness Metta practices, of breath work, and of compassion, and holding so much space for what is.

All through this fetter you will find that every lesson is followed by a meditation.

That is for you to have a lot of options, and to find the meditation practice that works the best for the issue at hand.

We would like to end this part of the lesson by emphasising the importance of going outside of your own capacity, and relying on outside council.

You need confidants around you, either as a group, as a guide, or with wise friends that can help you with reassuring you in your process.

### **FETTER 3**

Do you get upset if someone sits in your chair? Rites and rituals is an interesting one. On the surface, we might think of attending church as fitting this subject. Do you burn incense to achieve some purpose? What about insisting that something always be done in the same way? But the issue isn't the rites or rituals that we practice – it's our relationship to them. Notice on the fetter list on the previous page, it says "attachment to rites and rituals" If you are attached to them, invested in them, then you are most likely to be practicing them to avoid some potential catastrophe. It's easy to see if you are identified with one. DON'T DO IT. ..and see what happens. If, when you deny yourself the sequence of action that you would normally do, if you feel uncomfortable, then you have been presented with an opportunity.

**The following (in white) is with grateful acknowledgement to Pernille Damore**

**<https://www.youtube.com/@TheAwakeningCurriculum>**

The 3rd Fetter is the last part of the Foundational Triangle of Identification.

The 1st Fetter identifies with thought and body.

The 2nd Fetter identifies with feelings and emotions.

The 3rd Fetter is the fetter where you become aware of The Gap, and all the things that you do to support not feel the discomfort of emotions in Fetter 2, and to maintain roles, personal labels, and ways that we define ourselves that reinforce Fetter 1.

With Fetter 3, (as well as subsequent Fetters) you discover an uncomfortable feeling and learn to stay with it, not doing anything, not attempting to solve it, not intellectualizing it, or wanting for it to be different.

Just find quiet and silence, and sit with it.

This is also the Fetter of diversions.

This Fetter is about what you DO to get away from a feeling or an emotion.

You will never find the gap if you are busy trying to solve something. The longer you stay with an uncomfortable feeling, the more clear the delusion will become.

Where the 1st Fetter was about discovering the identification, and the 2nd Fetter was about discovering the feeling connected to the identification, the 3rd Fetter is about discovering the diversions we create in order to keep from feeling that feeling.

But at the same time, the 3rd Fetter also has its own type of identification tied into it.

All routines in our lives that we maintain and perform “with the purpose” of improving our identification, originate in the identification with feelings and emotions (2nd Fetter), and are reinforced by the identification with thought (1st Fetter).

Most of this happens subconsciously.

The 3rd Fetter therefore makes the distinguishing of the identification very complicated, since all 3 Fetters

become interwoven, and more difficult to see through, realise, and understand.

To move forward with the Fetters from here you need to be very clear that:

1. Thoughts are not truth:

Thoughts are just another sensory experience with a completely random pattern, and are no different than the sense of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. Identification with thoughts creates a delusion where “something” can be added to, or subtracted from, what is, in order to improve life, since all thoughts are “about” something.

2. Identification is delusional:

Feelings and emotions are not truth. They are just sensations appearing alongside of an apparently related thought. By detaching the direct experience from the content of the thought, you are placing yourself in a space of observation to notice what is really going on. Reality cannot be any different than it is, and does not need to be any different than it is.

3. Be aware of The Starting Point:

Conditioning and distress become our starting point for all interactions, both internal and external, expressed with the emotional indicators of fear,



anger, guilt and shame. Repressed trauma shapes a personality, and creates a toxic starting point. Since trauma can only exist with an identification, trauma does not need to be solved. Trauma does however need space, compassion, love and unconditional acceptance, and will dissolve if it is allowed to.

4. Be aware of The Bubble of Reality: No one can trigger or activate anything in you. You are the only one identifying, activating thoughts, merging them with past experiences, and projecting them into something happening in the now, and feeling that arising as “something”. (cf. “Something out of nothing” - 7th fetter)

5. Rigid routines are maintaining identification: Any action done with a purpose, any preference seemingly more desirable, and any attachment to planning ahead of time, are diversions or distractions from direct experience, and are used to ease an uncomfortable insight. Until the first 3 Fetters have been seen through, the identification (and trauma) will be maintained, and repeated subconsciously.

As long as there is identification, there will be a feeling of something needing to either improve or diminish due to the “I am not, I should be” mindset.

Every daily routine is a manifestation of our mindset and our Ego identification.

To discover this, take a minute and look into your morning routine.

Do you see how much identification is taking place?

Do you see how the underlying foundational belief is reflected into every action you take?

Every decision you make?

Every habit you have?

If you remove the identification, all habitual actions are deflated and seem pointless.

That is the extent of the identification taking place!

For most of us, when we engage in activities such as eating, fasting, exercising, or meditating, we often do it with a goal in mind.

We eat to be full, or we eat to lose weight.

We exercise to lose weight, or we exercise to avoid diseases in the future.

We meditate to achieve calm and become awake.

So with our daily routines we often have a very particular goal in mind, and a very clear expectation of a certain outcome.

All of that falls apart when we no longer identify with thought, feelings and emotions.

When there no longer is any connection between thoughts, feelings and emotions to anything.

They just arise.

As long as we identify, we remove ourselves from the present moment, and place our focus on an assumed reward in the future.

The approach of striving towards an assumed expectation, or a hypothetical goal, lacks the natural spontaneity, and more often than not, leads to disappointment and discontentment.

Since the Ego is always dissatisfied with an outcome, no matter the outcome, the cycle of chasing new objectives and desires is maintained, as is the delusion of the identification.

We call the rigid routines harmful since they perpetuate the illusion of the "I am not, I should be" mentality.

They fuel and maintain the Ego's dissatisfaction and constant craving for improvement, so further identification is inevitable.

In order to move on with the FetterWork, we need to disidentify and realise that there is no thought, feeling, or emotion that is truth, and therefore there is nothing that needs to be improved upon or cease to exist.

Things are as they are, and nothing needs to change or happen.

Reality always unfolds naturally in the present moment, without any need for striving or expectations.

By tuning into the current state of Being, and making contact with the sensory experiences, flow will happen from a space where decisions are based on a present need for rest, nourishment, exercise, and meditation. If any perceived obstruction is happening, the issue does not lie in the unfolding of the moment, but in the identification with an experience.

There is a present awareness for what feels right in the moment, without the pressure of any internal or external expectations or preferences.

Without identification.

Can you simply be present in the moment, without constantly chasing improvement, or seeking external validation?

Can you fully embrace and accept yourself as you are, without the need for constant self-improvement, and the delusory identification of who you are or could become?

Can you create space for any perceived obstruction, and just be with any activated identification?

I wish you well.



## Fetters 4 & 5

This is the final pair in the lower 5 Fetters. As these fall, so too will the grosser identifications with the self. Investigating these two will likely reveal a couple of home truths. • That there is no such thing as desire or aversion. • That they are the same. The Gap A good technique to use in investigating desire and aversion is an extension of what you learned earlier, when you learned about direct experience. So, to start with, we realize that we are experiencing an unpleasant feeling. Q: What is a feeling? A: It is a sensation plus a story. We are going to separate the sensations from the mental overlay. This may take a little practice. This would be one technique: • Sit comfortably • close eyes • scan the body for sensations • pick the most prominent sensation • focus on that while being aware of encroaching thoughts. You are not interested in what those thoughts are about. As they approach, just mentally flick them away. – They will comply and float away out of your awareness. When you can focus on the pure sensation, when the only thought is “wow, this is the only thought present.” Then ask yourself if you can find any information inherent to that sensation. Ask yourself “is the information that transforms that sensation into a feeling, is that always and only provided by the mind?” Now, back to a keen awareness of that sensation. Now looking for any inclination to distance that sensation. We are looking for a balance point between the sensation and the urge to end it. Being aware of it, but not responding to it. This can be described as being in the gap. The following video is an

excerpt from the 3 continents exploration of the 5th Fetter – Desire & Aversion. [Here is a link](#) to the whole session.

Where to investigate Yeah, yeah. Yeah, good one. Yeah. So, so what I was leading to before about you using using your body using the response that your body produces to direct your investigation where to go. And so you get a gut feeling you might be a really gross way to put it about about the rightness or the value of going in a particular direction. And then once you get that idea. and you feel the idea, you'd also use your intuition to generate, how can I put it, a question, not just not just a verbal word question, but that's will be part of it. But we want to produce a scenario that has just the right amount of juice for you to investigate. And so you might imagine yourself at home and in third grade you would be eight? Oh hell, So imagine yourself at home. During one of those moments when you're feeling sorry for yourself, where you're saying, I wish, I wish things were different. I wish I wasn't here alone kind of scenario. Imagine that. But what you're looking to do is to tap into the feeling that you had as that eight-year-old sitting there being alone. then play with the possibility that your desire for eating. Now that may be be different to say that it's saying you're desire for food. So again, you'll have to, that's part of the investigation. You will, you will consider whether or not it was a desire to get food into you or a desire to be eating food. And, and you can even now, the very next time you eat, you can watch whether or not there is an inclination, whether or not you're thinking about the next bite rather than the one that you're having now.

Right? If it's, if it's, if it's always a next bite focus, then it's very likely that the, the obsession was with eating rather than having food. Right? it's the act of eating that kind of gives you that pseudo satisfaction. It's never actually satisfying. because you got to keep doing it. But yeah.

Useful concepts “the sensation is a tight ball of tension in the abdomen, a contraction caused by fear, fear of death is the obvious one, but also fear of loss of control in my life.” OK, this is an opportunity to drop down to the next level of awareness. The words tight ball, & contraction are concepts. They are useful concepts because they are attempting to convey what was experienced. On the other hand, concepts like “tension”, “abdomen”, “fear”, “death” & “control”, all point to something that doesn't actually exist. Well, they do exist. They exist in stories. Stories of great complexity. Stories that have moral undertones like “good” and “bad” or “better” or “worse” When these concepts are ascribed entity status it is believed that they emanate instructions. We respond to those.. When we see them as empty concepts, when their fiction is recognised, we respond to that. THIS IS A GET OUT OF JAIL CARD. It is freedom from being (identified as) a captive of an idea. Now this doesn't mean that these feelings (feeling = sensation + story) won't happen anymore. They will. They are the result of habitual triggers. The difference between now and before is that now you will recognise the emptiness of those concepts and laugh at the fact that they turned up. Once seen – they are weakened. (if not completely dissolved) Nothing is ever undone. When

change happens, it's done. Further change can happen, but undoing that change can't happen. It's always forward. This is why whatever turns up, whatever life offers, anything – it's all good. If it's shitty, it's an opportunity to investigate a habitual trigger. If it's pleasant, it's an opportunity to investigate a habitual trigger. Just remember that ALL stories are an invitation down a rabbit hole to avoid experiencing sensations. (a big statement, I know. It will be fine tuned when circumstances invite..)

**The following (in white) is with grateful acknowledgement to Pernille Damore**

**<https://www.youtube.com/@TheAwakeningCurriculum>**

The first question you need to ask yourself before you move into the 4th Fetter is whether the issue you want to look at is placed in the 4th fetter, or if it is connected to any of the first 3 Fetters.

In other words, “Is this truly a Want, or is there anything underlying it?”

You do that by looking into the underlying narrative.

Let’s say you have a cup of coffee every morning.

I would now like for you to look into why you have that cup of coffee.

Do you really want a cup of coffee because you want it, or is it because you always get a cup of coffee in the morning?

Let’s say that by looking closely, you find out that the morning coffee is a part of your morning ritual, so it’s more a habit than a Want.



You now know that this belongs in the first 3 fetters and not specifically in the 4th Fetter.

You now need to go back to the first 3 Fetters to find out what it is about, since a habit can have 2 different roots and starting points.

The ritual of the morning coffee is connected to a thought: due either from classical and/or cultural conditioning.

That means that you were taught that before one goes to work in the morning, one needs a cup coffee.

With the example of the morning coffee it is easy to see the extent of the cultural conditioning.

How many other things in your life have the same deep rooted cultural conditioning?

Do you feel a need for hot chocolate when it is snowing?

Chicken soup or chamomile tea when you are sick?

Pumpkin lattes in the fall?

Doing something special on your birthday, for New Years or Christmas/Yum Kippur?

Watching TV in the evening with a glass of wine or a cold beer?

And if you are in the US, being with someone on Valentines day?

All those are cultural or classical conditionings, and need addressing and looking further into with the exercises from the first 3 Fetters.

The other root or starting point, is what we talked about in the 2nd Fetter, namely when you find out that what you think you want is promising something better than what you have now.

That want is usually a diversion from something else.

Let's use the example of the morning coffee again.

If you use the morning coffee as a diversion from something, it might be about you really not liking your job and being reluctant to go.

You rather want to go back to bed, but since you have responsibilities, you are enduring the work you hate.

It might also be that the cup of coffee is the one good thing you can do for yourself before you give away your entire day to a company and a cause you really do not care about.

Do you see how this is also connected to the glass of wine at the end of the day that now functions as a reward for your enduring 8 hours of misery?

The question in the 2nd Fetter is obviously: why do you endure it?

What is the underlying starting point for you?

You can chose between fear, anger, guilt or shame.

Pick one.

And pick the one you have seen come up multiple times during your process.

Chances are that it's the same one since what we do in one area, we tend to do in all other areas.

Now if you are at the point where you think that it's not about any of these things, it is for sure about a "Want".

If you Want a cup of coffee in the morning simply because you Want a cup of coffee in the morning, then there are multiple things you can do.

Imagine you swap the caffeinated coffee with a decaf coffee. (Or your normal decaf coffee for a cup of tea, or warm water.)

Is that ok with you?

If not, then look into what that is about, and go deeper with the first 3 fetters if needed.

If you think that a decaf coffee won't do because you need the caffeine, then just swap the morning coffee with a Redbull.

Is that ok with you?

And again, If not, look into what that is about, and go deeper with the first 3 fetters if needed.

By now, just by reading this, the entire ordeal might have been completely deflated for you. If so, then the urge for a cup of morning coffee most likely was a 4th Fetter experience.

The Want for a morning coffee is sorted, and you can have a glass of water instead because you are thirsty and the body needs to hydrate.

If that is the case, then look out for the next Want that the Ego is promising you will improve your life, and really look into the assumption with that.

If you are sure that this is clear of all trauma, and you are ready to move on with the 4th Fetter, then you can look at Wants from 3 different levels.

Look into what you really want, and feel into how there is a belief that tells you that life can be better “when”.

What is it you want to improve?

How would you feel?

What is present now, that won't be there when you get what you want?

What is the underlying motivation about?

What would you no longer need to endure?

If this is as good as it gets, and nothing will ever change, what feelings come up?

What is it that is so bad that it HAS to change?

Breathe!

Where are you right now?

How does the body feel?

Do you notice a contraction in the body that disappears when you fantasise about the Wants?

So where is the connection with the body and the Wants?

What is here that won't be here when you get what you want?

Do you notice the distance you are creating with the Wants?

Wants are only a thought with a promise. That promise is a clue to you about your underlying beliefs and diversions.

What are you trying to avoid?

What part(s) of you is now being dismissed again?



Can you hold space for that part(s)?

Acknowledge its presence and just stay with it?

Not change it?

Can you be in a body that is full of fear, anger, guilt, or shame underneath?

Can you stay with it?

It might help by thinking “I am this too”, and create unconditional acceptance for the Want that was being used as a diversion, and when you are ready, you can even love it!

Remember that if it wasn't here, you would not become aware of the part that has been dismissed.

Pull your awareness up to 5th floor, and look at the Want without any judgement or assumptions, but just contentment and kindness.

Stay here as long as is needed.

Now get ready to move into the non-dual.

Look into what you really want, and feel into how there is a belief that tells you that life can be better “when”.

It needs to be enough for you to feel the pull towards it, but not not enough for you to believe it to be true and get a reaction.

You might need to back up a bit from where you just were.

Pull yourself up to 5th floor and (1st fether) look into where you are looking from?

First off : Where does the attachment to that thought begin?

Who is telling you that you will improve?

Do you see the duality in the one telling you that you need to improve as if there is someone talking to a “you”?

Where is that “you” who will improve, and who is telling you?

Is there a difference between the thinker and the thought?

Is there any connection between the Wants and the thoughts?

Is the Wants anything else but a thought?

How does the body feel?

Were you “away” from the body when you thought about the Want?

Did you look into the advantage of being away from the body?

If you didn't notice, then go back and stay with this for a while, and look out for any bypassing!

If the thought of Wants is exciting, where is the “I” that is making that promise?

The Wants might have dissolved now, but you can continue and use this opportunity to awaken, so let's do that.

See if you can recall one of the assumptions of the Wants you had.

Do you notice how the thought and assumption derails you from the now, and drops you into an imaginary future?

Hold the feeling of the assumption while you now look into how the body feels.

Is there any connection with the body, and what you want?

Look into that assumption.

Can you separate the assumption and the sensations in the body?

Sit and play with the push/pull that this thought seemingly creates in the body.

Observe that the two are in no way connected, and that the bodily sensation is not as static of an experience as the assumption wants you to believe (ie. “The migraine is always the same.”)

In reality the two are not connected in any way, and when you disconnect, you allow the body to freely move sensations around.

Notice there is no one moving, only movements happening, not even an observer/experiencer, but only observations/experiences.

Any sensory experience is creating that movement and those experiences - so see, taste, smell, hear, feel.

Sights, smells and sounds will suddenly become beautiful, and you can start to cry at the beauty of it.

So crying might happen from this space, but just be in the world, and when it moves with this level of connectedness and detachment, notice what assumptions come up.

Look at all of them, and see if there is any connection to them, or an actual reality.

Lastly, to look into Wants, it is also a good practice to notice where the delusions lie: remember that there is nothing wrong with Wants!

It is all about noticing the attachment and the identification of a thought that promises a future, replete with a reward or an improvement, that can not actually take place right here, right now.

Enjoy





## The 5th Fetter

The 5th Fetter pairs with the 4th Fetter, and it is virtually impossible to experience one without the other.

However, we do find it important to become aware of the different types of identification that the two fetters activate, respectively.

The 4th fetter is about the energy of craving and “wants,” whereas the 5th fetter is about the energy of aversion and “don’t wants”.

So the 5th Fetter is about the resistance you feel when things don't go your way.

It is about the anger, aversion, ill-will, annoyance, irritation, resentment, envy and disappointment you feel towards yourself, and everyone else, when things do not happen as you expected them to, or when people do not act as you wanted them to.

When we describe the 5th fetter like that it can almost seem impossible to see through.

However, since any identification can never be about something external and outside of you, the 5th fetter at first glance might seem to be about “them.” But make no mistake, that is just a diversion!

It is all about you!

If you have gone through the previous fetters you have experienced how the topic slowly came more and more close.

The identification became deeper and deeper.

The underlying belief was revealed to be more and more settled as a “truth”.

As an underlying belief.

The 5th Fetter is the last of the lower 5 Fetters, so it has the quality of a sum-up Fetter that makes it very close, and therefore equally difficult to work with.

It really feels like it is not something in you, and that is what makes it such a clever diversion.

Seemingly it appears that the 5th fetter is about everything "they" did wrong to you, and the 4th Fetter is about what you think they should have done instead!

Our resistance feels like it is connected to a longing for things to be one way, and then reality turns out to be in another way, and we get really angry, irritated, frustrated and resentful about that.

But that frustration, anger and annoyance that we project onto the people we are involved with is only a diversion from the real issue!

That is why the 5th fether is so difficult to work with.

It really feels like “they” should have done differently.

It really feels like that is the issue.

But it is not!

The real issue is that we have an underlying sensation in the body that is perceived to make us vulnerable if we feel into it.

So we identify the sensation as “icky”, and that is now what we are trying to get away from.

You will soon experience that the sensation is not icky and you are not at all vulnerable by experiencing it.

It is more the “muscle memory” of that particular body sensation that reminds us of a very early time when that sensation was present in a situation where we perceived ourselves to be vulnerable.

And as a result we project onto others every time we feel we are getting close to the “dangerous” part.

So we have a perfect distraction and completely avoid feeling into that underlying belief that we are diverting from. But obviously we have a very clear indication to what the diversion is about, what the sensation is about, and what the memory is about.

Let's take an example:

Let's say you've been looking forward to coming home in peace, kicking your feet up and just relaxing after a long day. But when you get home, your partner has invited some guests over. So you can in no way just relax and be yourself.

Or let's say you have made an appointment to meet a friend to go to a bar. Your friend has the habit of being late, and today is no exception. So here you are sitting and waiting, wasting your time.

It could also be that you don't feel that your partner shows you love the way you need it.

You know your partner loves you, but it feels like you always have to ask your partner to show you love the way you need it, and it does not quite feel the same if you have to ask for it, compared to if they had just done it spontaneously themselves.

It feels like if you constantly have to ask them for it, then when love is not voluntarily given, it does not feel like it is real.

All 3 examples are showing in very different ways how we project an underlying belief into a situation and create a story that fits the belief.

The projection is the indication to what the underlying issue in us is about.

The situation is not loaded in any way.  
The situation is just as it is.

Your perception of the situation is the one bringing all the drama to the table.

On its own the situation is not loaded at all.

It is simply you having expectations that are not fulfilled and life just being life.

What the the 4th and 5th Fetter have in common is that we have certain expectations that we demand to be fulfilled and when they are not, we assume something in life to be wrong.

But what we have created with our expectation is fantasy and reality is most often very different than fantasy.

That is why we often feel that we live a life bouncing between what we want and what we have resistance towards.

We would like to bring your attention back to the underlying reason to why you create fantasy in the first place.

When we have an underlying belief that is based in a Toxic Starting point, we try to cover up or ensure that we won't feel it and that others won't discover it.

That is why the FetterWork can get so painful, until the moment we no longer hold in the underlying belief, and instead come from a space of openness to whatever is.

It takes a lot of identification to maintain and hold onto the belief, but since it is all mind-made it is also very nebulous and easily seen through.

But as we said it is tricky and often hiding in plain sight.

So it is important to emphasise that it is best not to work with the 4th and 5th Fetter alone.



The mind is cleverly avoiding looking at the fabrication, and what is hidden for you is often obvious for others.

So find a group or a guide who can listen and help you feel into your direct experience of what actually is.

The insights can only come when you keep yourself free from reactions.

As soon as you react you are at the other side of the Gap where your nervous system reacts and your hormones are released.

You need to stay on the non-reactive side of the Gap.

Pull yourself up on the 5th floor, where you can maintain an overview and be with all the feelings and emotions that come up, in the body.

And this is where it is useful to have people around you that can help you to unconditionally accept that things are the way they are and look at what is without any reaction.

You need someone who doesn't jump on the bandwagon when your Ego sits and talks about how totally inconsiderate your partner was by inviting guests to visit without asking you first. Or how annoying your

friend, who is always late, is and that "enough is enough" Or how inattentive your partner is towards your basic needs, and now it's time to put your foot down!

You really need someone to call your bluff and very lovingly and compassionately guide you to the insights that are waiting for you.

Whatever you believe someone is doing against you is only a projection of what you are doing against yourself in some way or another. So breathe and make contact with your body.

First off : Where does the attachment to the thought that something is not as it is supposed to be begin?

Who is telling you that something is wrong?

Who is judging what would be right?

And is what you deem wrong or right universal or just your opinion?

Sometimes when you look directly at duality it becomes very clear that identification is happening, and it sometimes makes it very easy to look through, since who is identifying?

Are you all of a sudden finding a difference between the thinker and the thought?

Is there any difference in what you don't want and a thought?

Can the Don't Wants ever be anything but a thought?

So make contact with your body: how does the body feel right now?

Were you "away" from the body when you thought about the Don't Want?

Did you look into the advantage of being away from the body in that moment?

If you didn't notice, then go back and stay with this for a while and look out for any bypassing!

If the thought of the Don't Wants is provoking, then just dial it back a bit so you don't jump the Gap.

Stay on the side where you can look at what is happening without any bodily reaction.

What you think is about the other person is about you, so define what is wrong and turn it around until you find the sentence that reveals what it is all about.

So in the first example you can say: “My partner does not think about my needs!”

Now turn it around and say “I do not think of my partner’s needs” and see how does that fit?

Your partner clearly wanted company so you are the one who brings the drama to the table and do not think of how that potentially influences your partner.

Feel into it: is that the issue?

Now turn it further around to a “I do not think about my needs” and see how does that fit?

Are you burning your candle at both ends at your job?

Do you say yes to more than you actually want to?

Do you do things at work you do not want to?

Why is that?

What is the underlying reason for that?

Fear, anger, guilt, shame?

Look into which of the emotional indicators are the driving force and sit with the feeling.

Or let's look at the example regarding your friend who is always late.

Start with the sentence that is happening in the moment: "My friend is disrespectful of my time." Now turn it around and say: "I am disrespectful of my friend's time," and see how does that fit?

Do you see that you want to dictate how your friend spends their time before meeting with you to ensure they do not waste your time.

Do you see how disrespectful that is?

Just like you want freedom to do with your time as you wish, well, so does your friend.

Now turn it further around to: "I am disrespectful of my time," and ask yourself: are you?

Are you disrespectful towards yourself in general in your life?

Why is that?

What is the underlying reason for that?

Fear, anger, guilt, shame?

Look into which of the emotional indicators are the driving force and sit with the feeling.

And in the last example of your partner not showing you love the way you want them to, you can make the sentence: “My partner is not loving me the way that I need.” Now turn it around to: “I am not loving my partner the way that they need.”

- Suddenly that becomes very clear!

You create a relationship where they are not allowed to be themselves but have to mind-read to please you just the right way. Now how are you loving them the way they need?

So now turn it further around and say: “I am not loving me the way that I need.” Feel into if that fits better.

Do you love yourself the way that you need, or could you be more connected to yourself with different displays of compassion, love and kindness?

As you see, the Bubble of Reality is still coated with mirrors. And everything you want on the outside is only ever a reflection of what is needed on the inside.



And that is the beauty of it.

It makes everything so uncomplicated and easy when you no longer identify and just see it as it is.

We have made a lot of inquiries for you to use where you follow the sting of attachments into the need, meet the need, detach the label and just stay with the bodily sensation.

When you do that you will feel how it suddenly starts to shift from an icky sensation to being a moving insightful experience.

Enjoy

## The 6th Fetter

Fixation regarding form

What is your relationship with what you perceive as the existence of form? If you touch something, is the sensation arising a proof that something was touched?, or proof of awareness of sensation? Is the memory that you once touched the back of your head, or the memory of seeing it in a mirror, is that memory proof of the existence of the back of your head? ..or is it proof that a memory exists? If not form? Then what? **Formlessness**? Here is an exercise to highlight how we create form.. Sit and feel the breath coming in and out of the nostrils. Feel the sensation of air movement at the entrance/exit point. Look straight ahead at something specific. Notice the sharp details of that thing. Now without moving your head or visual focus, notice how the peripheral vision gets fuzzier the further away from the sharp detailed view of the object. Notice also the tendency to guess what those fuzzy objects are. Now, keeping your eyes pointed where your head faces, start turning your head sideways slowly. Notice how what was fuzzy in your peripheral vision (previously) becomes sharp as it enters your central visual field. Now here's the big one. Notice the compulsion to identify the objects as they become clear. The shift from guessing (imagining) what they are to 'knowing'. At this point, look for a subtle connecting sensation to them. does it emanate from the object and hit the body, or does it emanate from the body and connect to the

object? Where in the body does the connection point touch? Is it the head or chest (or somewhere else?)

**The following (in white) is with grateful acknowledgement to Perrille Damore**

**<https://www.youtube.com/@TheAwakeningCurriculum>**

The 6th Fetter is about the Subject-Object illusion.

We have worked with the delusion of a self, and by now you probably agree that there is no-one here. However, once we take a step further, and start to inquire about how it feels to experience “inside” and “outside,” we become aware of the very subtle identification that is still taking place.

Working with the 6th Fetter dissolves the idea that there is still something in here which is separate and apart from everything else, out there.

It is about the idea that there is a more subtle “me” than found in Fetter 1, but still one who creates and experiences the concepts of space and distance.

You will also find that there is an even more subtle identification taking place that you almost always tend to overlook.

It is connected with the mental images, and the mental stories we attach to everything we assumingly perceive as being “out there” and “in here”.

If you really slow down and zoom in, you will find that every mental image that is attached to everything you assumingly perceive, has its own life with its own storyline and deeper levels of identification.

There is a very clear difference in what you mentally think you experience, and what you actually sensorily experience. Both need to be discovered and investigated.

What all of the exercises are pointing towards is exactly that! All of them need to be experienced in your daily life with focus on the sensory experience, free from the mental overlays.

Enjoy

## 7th Fetter

Fixation regarding the formless

Did you see that form was a conditioned perspective and that form only exists because of mind intervention?

**The following (in white) is with grateful acknowledgement to Perrille Damore**

**[https://www.youtube.com/  
@TheAwakeningCurriculum](https://www.youtube.com/@TheAwakeningCurriculum)**

The 7th Fetter pairs with the 6th Fetter, and it builds on the realisations that have come from questioning fundamental aspects of our reality, such as distance, subject-hood, and an inside and outside to experience.

The 7th Fetter is where we recognise that we are constantly creating things from nothing. The world, and all of its supposed objects that we interact with on a daily basis, do exist in one manner of speaking, all on their own. But they do not exist the way we interpret them with names, functions, judgments about them, memories and stories about their history, or relation to me and my story.

This is how we go from experiencing a constantly changing panorama of shapes, colors, sounds, scents, and other sensations, to experiencing a concrete world where we can place and name every object in it. And this includes those aspects of what we take to be an enduring self, our personality, and our interactions with others. This is the mechanism that lead to believing that the self existed, because a collection of thoughts and physical sensations were continuously being turned from fleeting appearances into a seemingly stable form.

But this process is subtle, and it is easier to see it in action once the individual self is no longer believed in.



Even though we have felt that there is no subject inside of a body with the 6th Fetter, it might still feel like there is something that is not the raw sensations themselves. It can feel like there is still perception happening. It might no longer feel like a “you” who is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling the world, but it is in the 7th where it becomes completely clear that all senses are self-illuminating. There is no such process as perception in the first place. That too was another assumption based on misunderstood evidence.

Lastly, because again, the 7th is about creating form (something) out of nothing, this is where we start to encounter the malleable, and often arbitrary, nature of our experience of time. Time is not simply the unbroken arrow, moving at a steady rate, and aimed in a single direction that it sometimes feels that it is.

We might have some sense of whether a memory is about an event that happened seconds, hours, months, or decades ago. But as strong as that feeling might be, we have no way of knowing with certainty. The appearance of the memory is always happening right in this one and only present. And your feeling of time passing is often unreliable, and subject to a host of factors that can easily trick and manipulate it to give incorrect estimates of how long it has been since a specific event occurred.

In short, seeing through the 7th Fetter is when you realize that whatever you assume, evaluate, judge and interpret about yourself, about others, about the world, and even about your past, was all nothing more than thought labels upon thought labels.

## 8th Fetter

Do I Exist

8. Conceit/over-estimation that “I Exist” How do you know that you exist? Is there any way that you can prove it (that “I Exist”), that isn’t a logical conclusion?

The following is with grateful acknowledgement to Steffi  
<https://stromeintritt.org/en/the-sense-of-being-the-8th-fetter/>

## The sense of being: The 8th fetter

The sense of being is the assumption that I am.

We believe that the sense of *I am* is true and that *being* is our fundamental nature. This is the end of all identification.

Buddha called the fetter *asmi-mana*.

The tendency to (self) conceit. So the imagination, or idea, of *me*.

*Because of not knowing the 10th fetter, we become troubled.*

*The restlessness of the 9th fetter gives rise to volitional agitation, the thirst for existence and sensual*

*experience.*

*Thus we come under the influence of the urges:*

*Avijjasava (ignorance instinct)  
the tendency to (self) conceit*

I am illusion

The 8th fetter is the imagination of *me*. It is the fundamental way we identify with experience.

It is the assumption that *I exist*. This sense of existing is very subtle and when it disappears, there is no more identity. You will no longer feel like a woman or a man, a mother or a father, a Christian or a Buddhist, and so on.

There is no longer an inside or outside.

With seeing through the 7th fetter, the experience of the world, the body, the mind is gone. But the subtle feeling of I am or I exist is fundamental. It has nothing to do with the world, the body or the mind, rather it is the ground on which the whole framework stands. This feeling has survived everything that was previously seen through and discarded as an illusion. The belief in a separate self. The belief in the changeability of experience. The assumption that the world is related to us. The assumption of perceiving something

independent of us. We have discarded all of this and so this feeling now lies open and can be enquired into.

This feeling of being is the desire that arises from the restlessness of the 9th fetter, that there must be something we can hold on to.

And so we invent being. Then perception, the world, the relationship to it, control over it and this autonomous person who holds it all securely in their hands.

Now we have reached the point where we can no longer point to anything and say: This is me! And yet there is this feeling...

### Enquiry into the 8th fetter

While the self of the first fetter was something very tangible after we could search with the 5 senses, this feeling is so subtle that it is hard to grasp. It feels as if it is the frame itself. The colour on the wall. The scent of the flower. The sound of the wind. And somehow this feeling creates a sense of home. Of an inner space that is our home. Where we live and are safe. From the outside. This most subtle of boundaries gives us proof that we exist.

And so we draw a line between: I am in here and everything else is outside.

| Inside | Outside |

But it's an illusion.

Releasing the 8th fetter

When the 8th fetter is removed, all boundaries disappear forever. There is no more inside and outside. The last feeling of self disappears as there is no more separation and duality is no longer felt. What remains is experience. That which was always there anyway. The fact that separation is no longer experienced does not mean that differences are no longer experienced. But these differences are no longer taken as proof that / exist.

Now we realise that there is no need for a self in order to suffer. The suffering is significantly reduced. But it is still there.

The self had an important function. It helped us to repress painful feelings and hold them somewhere in the body. And when it is no longer there, unresolved traumas that may still be there come into our experience. This is usually a process that begins with the disappearance of the self illusion, so that in the fetters of desire and aversion, we have to deal with these traumas and repressed feelings in particular.

We can save ourselves a lot of suffering if we pay attention to signs of trauma on our way through the fetters, accept them and work on them (with professional help if necessary).

The words *I* or *me* are still used, but they no longer have any meaning in relation to what is happening.

Since there is no longer an inside, the place we could go to when we wanted to withdraw from the world has also disappeared. The space we explored in meditation never existed. There was never a *here inside* or a *there outside*. It was an imagination. It was a beautiful and often helpful and safe illusion that we no longer need.

In mediation, all senses are now focussed on experience. Seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting. So there is actually no longer any difference between – yes, between what?

With the shift in the 8th fetter, a deep peace often spreads. An incredible silence. Because there is simply nothing left. The boundary to the world is gone. The friction.

Unseparated from life, like a drop in the ocean. Like the colour on the wall. Like the scent of a flower. Like the sound of the wind. A particle among particles. A movement, one with the movement of life.



I am is the basic assumption from which all other assumptions arise. The first and most constant experience we have.

The fact that I am is what I am. The experience of being.

All appearances disappear when I am disappears. All focussing on projections outside disappears.

The first illusion is consciousness: I am.

Then come inside, outside, objects, feelings, thoughts, self.

The whole illusion of what we call the world, the whole world of experience, has its origin in the assumption: I am. And when this assumption of I am dissolves, there is only infinity. Vastness. Silence.

## 9th Fetter

### Restlessness and compensation

The Restlessness of the 9thfetter will arise after the last subtle sense of 'I am' or 'I exist' has fallen away. In this fetter, you'll be able to witness first-hand how the fetters created the sense of self.

You will recognise the restlessness. It has been there all your life, continuously re-creating the illusions which would collapse like a house of cards, if they weren't maintained all the time.

### HOW TO Recognise THE RESTLESSNESS OF THE 9THFETTER

Though it is a very familiar feeling, it might not always be easy to recognise the restlessness when it starts to create a noticeable unrest.

When it arose for me, I first thought I had a really hard time coping with no longer experiencing this familiar taste of me, when in fact restlessness had already set in, looking for the 'me' that needed to be protected. And couldn't find it...

The restlessness was very intense, I went on long walks, trying to walk it off but it didn't work.

## WHAT DOES THE RESTLESSNESS DO?

The restlessness tries to establish again what it once created with the fetters: the sense of there being something

- substantial,
- permanent,
- making us always feel good.

This was the force which created the first sense of ‘I am’ or ‘I exist’ when it couldn’t find anything that seemed reliable or could be known.

It is not anything, YOU’RE doing. It is an impersonal force like the tides. I often thought of the tides that go in and out and the power they have. They shape the shores.

The restlessness shapes the sense of self.

## WHAT DOES RESTLESSNESS FEEL LIKE?

The restlessness can come in many facets.

For some time, I experienced the incredibly strong urge of wanting to know what was coming. My thoughts were racing, trying to find a safe grip in knowing something for sure.

Also, I tried to solve problems all the time, sometimes problems I first had to create in an imagined scenario, so I could solve the riddle then.

For some people, old emotional conflicts or traumas can surface and need to be felt. It is as if with the last sense of self, all defense mechanisms are gone as well that keep emotional problems away from our conscious experience. Every issue that is unfinished will arise and needs to be looked into.

Many people say that there is no suffering without a 'me' suffering. This is so NOT TRUE!

There can be a lot of suffering during this restless phase. So much resistance to what is arises, and that is what creates the suffering.

For me, it felt so terrible that I decided to open a FB group about the fetters because I wanted a few more people to complain to. I felt so sorry for my guide, Kevin, who always had to listen to me lamenting about how bad I felt.

I even wanted to stop the inquiry just to get out of this tormenting restlessness. Who cares about enlightenment when you feel that terrible? But I couldn't get out. The process was

running itself, there was no emergency exit. That was actually the worst for me, that I couldn't do anything about it and just had to suffer it.

## THE THREE IMPOSSIBLES THE RESTLESSNESS IS LOOKING FOR.

There are three things that are simply not available, no matter how much we want them:

1. Substance, wanting experience to be some-thing, have a thingness to it.
2. Permanence, expecting to be permanently and reliably experiencing something.
3. Satisfactoriness, assuming that it is possible to always feel good.

One of the three impossibles is usually missed most badly. It could be substance, permanence, or always feeling good.

For finding out which one is mostly missed, you can state these three sentences, one sentence at a time, and notice which one has the strongest charge.

*“There is no such thing as permanence and predictability.”*

*“There is no such thing as satisfactoriness and always feeling good.”*

*“There is no such thing as substance and knowing what is happening!”*

Which sentence gives rise to the strongest sensations?

## THE EXISTENTIAL GAP

The 9thfetter ‘restlessness’ can feel very similar to desire and ill will. In both cases, we resist what is actually happening or true.

The difference is that when inquiring into desire and ill will, it is about something you can theoretically have. Your child might brush their teeth without fighting, your spouse might participate in the household chores, and your boss could be kinder to you... so we think.

When the restlessness arises, we’re looking into an existential gap. What the restlessness is looking for doesn’t exist at all, and we have to come to terms with it.

It can be really hard. I had already seen what I had ignored (the 10thfetter shift) and yet, the restlessness came back, looking for ways to feel good. In this regard, the 9this a lot like 4/5, it can come back later even if it had already calmed down.



Once it has calmed down, the ignorance (the 10thfetter) can be seen through.

The 9thfetter is the only fetter that doesn't fall away with a shift. One day, you'll simply notice that it is no longer there

The following is with grateful acknowledgement to  
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The 9th fetter is usually translated as “restlessness”, though it is not the restlessness we might experience during the day or while meditating. Rather, it is the unsettling awareness that whatever assumptions we might have as to a supposed “nature of reality”, such as the notion that permanence, identity or control is somehow available as an aspect of experience, are not true. This is not a self-referent fetter, but the result of being spiritually ignorant in the first place, upon which we then built a “me” or a “self”.

From here, as we look back on the first 8 fetters, so many different illusions were manufactured, and all of them needed some sort of support or foundation. How we provide that foundation is by assuming that whatever we are experiencing is somehow permanent, always satisfying and/or ultimately real or substantial. Here, at the ninth fetter, now that there is no longer

anything that could be described by such terms, we explore whether those characteristics of permanence, satisfactoriness and substance are even available.

Since qualities like permanence are not actually available, here we start to finally come to grips with that fact, and realize how we've been chasing an abstract idea (e.g., "permanence") that we simply cannot find. As a result of these unrealistic beliefs, there has always been a mismatch between what we believe we are experiencing (or will hopefully experience) and what is actually the case, and a natural response to that is one of restlessness and unease. While we may have been at least subconsciously aware of this mismatch all these years, now that mismatch is finally front-and-center.

We can therefore start to appreciate the life-long urge to do something about this mismatch, and to resolve the tension it creates. The 9th fetter can also be seen as the underlying tendency to compensate (another translation of the Pāli term *uddhacca*) for that mismatch. Having now abandoned the notion that anything exists that could possibly have the qualities such as permanence that we seek, here we can finally start to explore whether those qualities are available in the first place. Without the landing spot of a "me" that ostensibly has the qualities we are looking for, there can be a very definite sense of still casting about for those

qualities – it's like we miss the ability to fool ourselves that we or anything else is what we want or hope it is.

We also see that while we cannot find anything permanent, satisfying or substantial, we also cannot find their opposites. Here, we realize that the abstract ideas that what is happening is characterized by impermanence, suffering and insubstantiality are also not true or even helpful. Rather, these were intended to be reminders that we couldn't find what we were looking for all these years, rather than descriptors of "reality". These pairs of opposites are now seen to mutually define each other, rather than being able to stand alone as the way things really are: in other words, "impermanence" is every bit as delusory as "permanence".

To cling to the notion that what is happening is inherently impermanent, insubstantial or liable to suffering would therefore be the opposite extreme of the delusions we started with, and in the case of suffering would call into question whether or not the end of suffering is a legitimate purpose or goal of the Buddhist path. Though these three pairs of concepts can be quite helpful up to a certain point, as a well-known Buddhist simile advises us, they can and must be set aside as helpful rafts that helped us to travel to the opposite shore, rather than encumbrances we strap to our backs and continue to carry around.

Breaking this fetter is not about rooting out those three unrealistic beliefs: that comes next. Rather, it is coming to accept that what we seek isn't available, by which the sense of restlessness and the urge to try and compensate for not finding what we cannot find, can finally stop. We are not done with the path, but we are done with trying to change, create or avoid anything. The belief that falls away here is that trying to find or create a different version of what is happening now will somehow do any good. It's not that we resign ourselves to unrealistic beliefs such as permanence or always feeling good: we just aren't compelled to do anything about them any longer when we see they aren't available or true.

The shifts to this point may have been quite obvious, such as when the belief in a separate 'self' evaporated. However, when the 9th fetter falls away, it can be very subtle, and it may be that you simply realize one day that that restless urge to compensate is no longer there. While this shift might be subtle and even imperceptible while it is happening, the "result" can nevertheless be quite joyful, peaceful and relaxing, because you have finally stopped trying to resist what is happening, and stopped trying to change the world to your own liking.

As with every shift to this point, it's not that something "wrong" has been destroyed or broken, nor has anything "right" been cultivated or adopted to take anything else's place. Rather, it's more a letting go of the notion that anything is right or wrong, at least in terms of compelling us to cling to what is happening now or compulsively seek some other version of it. It's thus not a matter of resigning ourselves to what is happening in some passive sort of way: if anything, awakening can help us to be more effective in life, including in helping those around us.

Looking at the other traditional path descriptions, the ninth Mahayana bhumi can be translated as "the good mind", where one is able to find their voice and be of service to others because they finally have an experiential understanding of what they have been ignoring throughout their lives. They can speak from experience, and even though unrealistic beliefs are still in place, they now know what that has been all about and how it manifests in life. The Buddhist tradition suggests that it is really only those who have reached the ninth bhumi who are truly in a position to teach others, because they have not just realized for themselves that there is no "me" whatsoever, but they also know why they had always ignored this fact, thus can help others to realize the same for themselves.



This stage also correlates to the beginning of the Mahamudra yoga of “no meditation”. Here, one starts to appreciate that once all false beliefs have evaporated, so too will the need for meditation as a tool for getting rid of those beliefs, even though meditation will still be quite available as a quiet abiding.

## **Ignorance or Not knowing.**

The Tenth Fetter

Not Knowing

The 10th fetter (Pali avijja) is usually translated as “ignorance”, though a better (and more literal) translation is “not-knowing”, in that what we believe to be true is in fact not so. At this final stage of the path, we have peeled away all but this underlying tendency to grasp onto or seek something that seems true but isn’t, and it is this tendency towards misconception that gave rise to all the other fetters.

In the Buddhist tradition, the three fundamental misconceptions are that permanence, substance and



satisfactoriness can somehow be found or known. We may know at a conceptual level they cannot be found, but nevertheless choose, at a fundamental and likely subconscious level, to ignore that. Ignorance is bliss, or we at least want to believe that.

How do we “not know”? In general, we attempt to superimpose the three illusory qualities of permanence, substance and satisfactoriness onto everything we experience, and assume that they are or could be true. We thus mentally create a different version of what is happening, where those three qualities are actually or possibly found. That is not to say that these sorts of concepts have no practical or conventional use: good luck getting across the street or making dinner if you don't use sidewalks and frying pans which are ostensibly permanent and substantial!

At a deeper level, though, we want those qualities to always and truly be present. We are of course regularly disappointed and thus suffer as a result. It is as if we have the underlying tendency to take these sort of ideas too far, and assume life can and in fact should be pleasurable and satisfying, that what we perceive has substance, and that there really is permanence and predictability to it all. In essence, there is “ignore-ance” of what is impossible or not available, instead seeking a version of what is happening in which things are more to our liking. We therefore think we know what is

happening, but we in fact don't know: "not knowing" is what is actually happening.

While in the 9th fetter we became OK with the fact that we aren't able to find permanence or anything else, here we finally let go of the perceived need for them, and in fact the beliefs in them. Whatever is, simply is: whatever happens simply happens, and we don't have to (and in fact cannot) fabricate a different version of it. At this final stage, we realize that none of that fabrication is needed, and in fact only adds complications.

Once the underlying tendency to false knowing is rooted out, we are finally done trying to interpret what is happening towards a particular end, and we can simply know what is happening: that's "what's left" once the interpretation machine is seen for what it is. No particular thoughts or structure are needed as a support, and we find that we already know what we need to know. Thoughts necessary for daily life reliably arise when needed, and then are released when no longer needed, without any belief or expectation that there is more meaning to them than that.

We are at unshakeable peace with that fact, and settle into what might be called our natural state. It's not nihilism: as the Zen saying goes, mountains are still mountains, and waters are still waters. In other words,

the interpretation machine still “works”. However, we fully see that it is in fact all an interpretation, and one that is not to be taken as more than that. The good news is that we will always be able to rise to the interpretive level and respond in whatever way is necessary, whether looking for our keys or talking with a good friend.

There is also an obvious “this is it, I’m done” sense when this last fetter is broken, whereby it is clear that there is nothing left to do in terms of spiritual practice. Meditation is still possible, and even enjoyable, but the life-long urge to change, grow, let go or otherwise seek a change to what is happening and one’s experience of it via meditation comes to an end. The Buddha frequently described it as going beyond the cause-and-effect of rebirth, living out the spiritual life, and doing what was to be done, by which there is no more coming into being.

Most importantly, suffering stops, not in the sense that hitting your thumb with a hammer won’t hurt (it will!). Rather, it is that the mental anguish of not getting what you want or expect no longer arises, by which you can take care of your hammer-bashed thumb, calmly change lanes when cut off in traffic, and otherwise respond to life without any of the drama and anguish that once might have occurred.

No longer having any unrealistic expectations about what will happen, it can all just happen without feeling like there is anything wrong (or "right") happening. However, it's not that you will just go along with anything happening: in fact, you are more able than ever to intercede where it makes sense, because you no longer bring your own suffering into the situation.

As for the experience of this fetter falling, it may come as a disappointment that there are no grand fireworks displays or some other "peak experience" when suffering stops. One aspect of working in a step-wise way through the fetters is that, by this point, there is so little left in terms of beliefs that need to evaporate that, as with my experience, the "big moment" is a brief recognition of the final shift, a "well, what do you know..." sort of recognition, and then on with the rest of the day. Though the actual experience was thus quite straightforward, talking about that experience now with others reliably brings tears to my eyes: suffering really can end!

The tenth and final Mahayana bhumi is called the "cloud of the Dharma", where one is now in a position to cause the rain of the Buddha's teachings to fall on the rest of the world. However, this is not to say that one achieves the effect or renown of (what is generally presumed to be) the historical Buddha, and one may not venture into the area of teaching at all but instead

share their experience of awakening in some other way. As the final Mahamudra yoga describes, this is the point of no more meditation, at least in terms of meditation being effective as a means toward awakening and the end of suffering, because that is now completed.

A traditional way of describing this final juncture is that one knows that they suffered, knows that the belief in mental fabrications was the reason they suffered, knows that all that suffering has now stopped, and knows that they have traversed the path that leads from suffering. These “four noble truths”, now referred to in the past tense, are what the Buddhist path was, and is, all about.

Who knows what is beyond the 10th Fetter? For sure, there is continued learning.. Now that we are cognisant of the way mind creates our experiences, we (maybe) focus on cellular memory. Stuff that the body has stored either from pre-verbal ages or stuff our trauma suppressed or denied into a non-cognitive something...

The totality of the world cannot escape my experiencing

The world is created by the flavour of my thoughts



As individuals, we are not mere bystanders in this vast world that surrounds us. On the contrary, we carry within ourselves the very essence of the world around us. The world is not simply a physical place that exists outside of our own personal experience: rather, it is something that is intimately intertwined with our own being. It is a part of us, and we are a part of it.

When we stop and reflect on this reality, we can begin to see the interconnectedness of all things. The trees, the birds, the mountains, and the oceans – they are all a part of us, just as we are a part of them. We are not isolated individuals, but rather, we are all connected in ways that we may not even fully grasp.

So, when we say that the world is inside us, we are acknowledging this deep and profound truth. We are recognizing the unity of all things and our own place in that unity. And in doing so, we can begin to approach life with a sense of wonder, appreciation, and gratitude for the incredible interconnectedness of all things.

It is intriguing to contemplate the notion that the physical world is constructed by our perceptions and cognition. This postulates the possibility of a lack of universal reality, but rather, multiple subjective versions of it. This concept brings us to consider how we interpret and comprehend the phenomena that surround us, and how our mental frameworks and convictions shape our experiences. Acknowledging the weight of our thoughts in determining our outlook on the world, we might feel more empowered and content. This idea



is captivating, as it stimulates an intellectual curiosity to explore the ontological nature of reality and the epistemological implications of perceiving it.