

THE SELFWARD
FACING
WAY



THE SELFWARD FACING WAY

A Course for Living
the Direct Experience of
Your Eternal Nature

(Volume 1: Understanding)

SALLY ROSS

Everything Here



PRESS

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Dedication and Introduction to the Course

This writing, and the reading of it in this very moment, is dedicated to (and *is*) the universal, undifferentiated essence that's here right now. This "right now hereness" is what makes everything possible. The fact that you are, which is undisputable, means that life exists. The word *life* does not refer to something that could have an opposite, like death. What I am speaking of is the life that gives rise to, includes, sustains and saturates all the comings and goings that we can ever conceive of. The life that is not fazed by birth or creation of any kind, and is equally unmoved in death or destruction.

This life has never not been, and can never cease to be.

When one's own mind activity is surrendered to it, one recognizes: *it is myself*. Same same. This recognition is the perpetual outpouring of life unto life, in love with its own Self.

There is no possibility that my writing and your reading are separate in this moment. Everything is as it is, simply because you are. You can trust in this.

I am happy to be with you to share some insights, pointers and encouragement as you deepen into the truth you know to be here, waiting at the core of yourself.

* * *

This Course is presented in two parts: *Understanding* and *Practice*. In modern times, the word “practice” has been frequently misinterpreted and misconstrued as humanity evolves in its consideration of matters concerning truth and reality. Practice should never be a complicated or confusing endeavour, yet there are subtle nuances that allow it to bear fruit in your life. It is powerful in its subtlety, and this cannot be treated lightly. For these reasons, I feel it is important to establish a very clear understanding as a foundation from which to practice. Your capacity to investigate the truth directly will be fortified with a strong understanding of what practice reflects.

The Course is intended to support you whether you are a seasoned practitioner of Self-Inquiry, or meditation, and equally if you are a beginner to this practice.

The dedication of our Course cannot leave out my gratitude to the gifts of understanding and practice that have been given to me by my Teacher, C. Above all, he taught me how to practice in a patient, authentic and uncontrived way. Because of him, through study I was exposed to some of the most profound sages and teachers of truth. He helped me to become one-pointed in my focus by encouraging me to absorb only the teachings that were speaking directly to what I actually *am*, here and now.

If I became distracted by concepts that were not wholly devoted to this “eternal issue” (as C likes to call it), it meant that precious time for the freedom of earnest, surrendered practice was inevitably squandered. Internally, I always suffered as a result. With maturity I can see that there was nothing wrong in this, that everything unfolds perfectly according to each person’s own unique make-up and ultimately no time can be “lost.” But now that the eternal issue has become the primary concern of my whole life, I am aware of the importance of communicating about it in a way that permits others to go directly to the heart of the matter.

It is my deepest wish that this Course will give you the most basic and fundamental tools you need to maintain your Selfward-Facing Way. “Basic and fundamental” are the very *best* tools, because with so little you can receive more than you could possibly imagine. Not swaying from the degree of simplicity that is being offered to you, your understanding and practice take you directly Home.

There is nothing of greater significance in this world than your discovery of what it is that’s living you. Once you recognize this reality, and establish yourself here, peace will reign in your life. Peace overflows and is shared with all beings, without the requirement for any effort on your part.

Your peace is the peace of God, of Life, of Pure Consciousness... of Self.

As you read, learn and practice, I hope you can allow these words to settle and nest quietly inside your being. Your degree of quietness, attentiveness, curiosity and honesty determines the extent to which what is conveyed here will reverberate as your own natural, ever-expanding insights.

CHAPTER 1: The Conceptual Dilemma

The only hindrance to your abiding—peacefully and happily—as the ever-present, eternal truth of your own nature is concepts.

Concepts are the means by which the whole functioning of a human life stream occurs. As human beings, we require them in order to mature from infancy through childhood, youth and adulthood—in order to learn. Concepts both arise from, and contribute to, brain development. Our day-to-day activities are a continuous series of concepts. We are taught to label our experiences in order to make sense of them, to compare them with other experiences and to therefore gain an ever more complete picture of how we should live in the midst of great diversity.

Concepts have evolutionary value.

There is one concept that is universal to everyone, and which leads to the formation of every other concept. This one concept is responsible for all that we perceive as the world and everything in it. It arises spontaneously and innocently through the normal, natural process of differentiation, when as babies we come to recognize our own name and the various faces of our mother, father, and other people around us. Soon enough, through this

process we learn to identify ourselves as a *separate individual*. Since this identity has been passed on to us through imitation and repetition—and we do not yet have the cognitive faculties to question its accuracy—upon it we build our entire life.

This universal concept is the word “I.”

Intimately linked with this concept, at a mostly unconscious level, is the idea “I am just my body.” We believe our *I-ness* is dependent on this marvelous physiological mechanism we inhabit as the form that carries our name, our gender, our skills and abilities, our life histories, and so on. Each body is made marvelous by its nature of fulfilling the delivery of sense perception. Our sensual capabilities of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch determine how we make choices, respond and interact as we move through life.

The body that every person—as well as every other sentient being—is most familiar with is the one it calls “me.” Without exception, this familiarity arises through repetitive patterns of the sensing and perceiving abilities uniquely experienced in each individual body. One of the most salient patterns is the reflection of the face we see in the mirror. You and I both look at that image every day, and often many times during the day in many different places. Mirrors are a great way of being reminded of what we “look like,” and through repeatedly observing this visual impression we gain proof that the

image represents *who I am*.

Naturally, the image I see of “me” and the image you see of “you” are different images, because two different bodies are being reflected in the mirror. But we are both subject to the conditioning I am referring to. That is, we are equally susceptible to becoming fixated on the concept that the image we observe is who or what we are.

Once this fixation has become firmly established in one’s life, it leads to many concepts that cause a lot of confusion and trouble. Here we’ll focus on two big problems.

The first big problem: *The image I see in the mirror is always changing*. Sometimes I like what I see, and sometimes I don’t. For a long time when I looked in the mirror the image was full of youthfulness, and now my reflection contains wrinkle lines and gray hairs. I may spend a lot of time trying to improve and enhance the image based on other images I perceive around me that seem to indicate degrees of attractiveness or vitality. This keeps me very busy, because no matter what I do, the reflection in the mirror continues to change. I try to hold on to an image of myself that feels “just right,” but it never stays. Forever and ever, it changes, it changes, it changes...

The second big problem: *When I think I am the image, I believe others are images too, and I feel separate*. When I feel separate, I have to be constantly doing something to

resolve my sense of isolation, which is a very exhausting endeavour. This activity takes many, many forms in the human story; its ultimate result is fragmentation. It reflects itself in our most intimate one-to-one relationships, and in the collective situations we observe all around us throughout the planet: violence and warfare, massive inequalities of wealth and power, frantic overconsumption of precious ecological resources, and beyond.

Fundamentally, it is the belief in separateness that creates all the suffering of this world.

* * *

Accepting concepts to be the truth is an essential error of perception, based on the mind's conditioning. Lasting peace is impossible to find in any concept of yourself, in any image, any thought or feeling. Concepts take your attention away from the immediate reality of who you are. Yet they are so entrenched in the thinking process of the human condition that just to hear this and intellectually grasp it is usually not enough to release oneself into one's actual, inconceivable Selfhood, which is infinitely vaster than the marvelous collection of cells and particles converging as the body-mind form reading these words right now.

When through the practice of Self-Inquiry you dispel the concepts "I am just my body" and "I am separate," all

other concepts will be left behind along with them. Our investigation concerns what it is that never changes and is not subject to any sense of separateness.

In the following chapters we will go deeply into what it means to investigate the truth of yourself beyond any conceptual understanding of what you are. For the most profound deepening possible, it is also essential to discuss the implications of “concepts” in respect to the words you are reading right now on the computer screen or the printed pages of this Course. This will support you in being very precise about what your own intimate investigation of truth entails. Your precision will ultimately express as effortless being, which is the pure joy of living from the ever-established peace of your true nature.

* * *

Regarding the jewels of written text that my Teacher brought to my and others’ attention over the years, he once said the following:

“Read these jewels like a prayer, and then drop them like a hot potato.”

It is important for you to keep this in mind as you read along, because what my words are pointing to is something that ultimately can never be encapsulated by this medium of language.

Words are concepts. The words of this Course—its concepts—are *pointing to* the truth of who you are, which is not a concept.

You are non-conceptual. This is the supreme reality that the mind will never grasp, but can surrender to.

The human thinking mind is addicted to grasping for concepts. Our habitual mental activity of trying very hard to comprehend—to develop a sense of personal power by accumulating knowledge—imposes an imagined limit on the limitless, all-powerful freedom that is reading these words without need of knowing. Through the practice of Self-Inquiry, this limitless freedom is recognized and becomes familiar. We can relax completely into it, and the desire to grasp at understanding how or why this is so eventually disappears. The grasping tendency is redundant and unnecessary, because it cannot *change* anything. Nothing of permanence is gained or lost by concepts produced through the activity of the thinking mind.

Limitless freedom is enjoyed more and more when *not knowing* becomes our cherished “true knowledge,” which is also called Self-Knowledge. In your willingness to suspend conceptual thinking, you can dive infinitely into *your being*, which you will discover to simultaneously exist as all and everything. Unattached to any concept of what you are, you can recognize that the self-evident truth is an ever-present, never-ending wholeness. When

there are no concepts to stand in the way of your simply abiding as you are, in each moment, you know yourself to be forever *here*. “Forever hereness” is indistinguishable from your true identity. Self-Knowledge brings peace.

This is reality *as it is*, utterly free of conceptualizing and characterization—free of self-labeling.

You can likely perceive in all of this that linguistically speaking we’re in a bit of a dilemma. How can one have knowledge without knowing, for example? Why am I giving you labels, like “reality” and “truth,” for something that is free of labels? Attempting to explain in words what is wordless at the core demands responsibility on my part, and discrimination on your part. But in your reading, everything will become clear if you gently permit yourself to enter into the apparent paradoxes in order to meet and merge with the energy—the silence, the love—that is shining underneath the written message. This shines in this very instant as your true Self, which is not fragmented or made up of parts, and has no paradoxes.

* * *

It is said that one should never mistake a word to be the thing it refers to. As you progress through this Course, I encourage you to consider and investigate the unbound, unending reality being conveyed by any concept of

thing-ness in my message. Words should never leave you with a stopping point or a definitive conclusion. They should only ever encourage you to look more deeply and investigate their truthfulness. This will allow you to keep aware of *yourself* before, within and beyond the message, and to include in this awareness the bigger picture within which these words are becoming apparent to you. In fact, you can discover that you, your awareness and the bigger picture are one and the same thing. This is the biggest picture, and getting bigger still...

While reading or studying anything, we invariably forget about the paper or the screen that the words are appearing on. All this white space is actually what makes the message communicable! Encompassing even more of the big picture in our awareness, we can ask what conscious presence is holding *both* the appearance of the words *and* the screen or background that makes them detectable... and even the most subtle apprehension of meaning that arises from these ideas, as well. Does this conscious presence—your own, in this very moment—have any characteristics? Does it have words?

This presence has to be you. No words, no screen and no knowledge of any kind could exist otherwise.

* * *

The “direction” of understanding and practice encouraged here is that of facing Selfward without any idea of

what you are. If you are overly fascinated with ideas—with forms or images—then your practice cannot go beyond them to a comprehension of what these words are pointing to. A mind that believes the answers to the deepest questions are to be found in a particular form (or formula!) is unable to rest in the true nature of itself.

When one's mind is continuously forming concepts, which is its habitual tendency, what unfortunately happens is that one also tends to perceive the concepts as if they were reality. Moving through the Course, it will likely become easier for you to avoid falling into this conditioned manner of thinking, because the written concepts here are pointing you very directly towards the truth of yourself—the non-conceptual eternal reality. Your being will resonate with the words, because they will be reminders of what you already feel to be true and real.

It is not always so easy in our day-to-day lives. Generally, we are saturated in concepts that are not pointing to the truth in such a direct manner. Most of them point directly away from the truth, in fact! When we finally come to a place of wanting to *live* the truth of ourselves, we begin to recognize how quickly we can get caught up in believing concepts to be true. And as this recognition deepens, it becomes increasingly evident how different we *feel* when we are caught in concepts, versus when we aren't.

This is what makes practice so relevant and precious. The intention of this first volume of our Course is to “set up” an understanding that allows your practice to be entirely non-conceptual. When you practice without concepts, every moment becomes a direct experience in the living truth of your eternal nature. Your feeling of being free and at peace eventually becomes constant, because you recognize yourself to *be* this freedom, this peace. Life flows in its own unrestricted, effortless way through your direct abidance as this essential recognition of what you are at the core.

* * *

As we move into the territory of going beyond concepts and begin to practice here, we discover what is left over when the most sublime and profound teachings we’ve ever come across have landed us back where we started, which is where we always were: here.

All along, who and what we are has never changed. The shifting image or idea I had of myself did not in any way contain, enhance, reduce or otherwise alter the truth of myself.

In this way, your understanding has a quality of being ever fresh and direct. You can then avoid the trap of having your practice stagnate in a dependence on ideas, teachings and philosophies. By remaining fixated on particular philosophies or “techniques” of practice, the

mind cannot surrender to the innocence and the humility that is required to go beyond all concepts. Fixation means that our inherent capacity to earnestly investigate what is true becomes hampered.

When fixation of any kind is let go of in Self-Inquiry, an ever-deepening recognition of your true nature dissolves all words and concepts. These come and go in your awareness, as words and concepts may, but you do not try to hold on to them. You stay established in your unspoken here-and-now beingness (your eternal nature, your never-ending wholeness), not concerned with how this self-evident truth is represented or spoken of conceptually.

Once someone has pointed out the truth, you have no need to look back at the words to remind you again of where truth is. You can just simply confirm its presence, its beauty and its limitlessness for yourself. What's true is true, period! Eventually, the words I use to *indicate* what is true will just get in the way of your full, complete, unobstructed vision of the truth. That's not to say you won't feel gratitude. (Gratitude feels wonderful.) But proceeding onward in the direction the words are pointing—beyond them—you continue on your own perfect Selfward-Facing Way in an open, pure manner. There is nothing left for you to know or be taught. You do not depend on any teaching to remind you of this road that you yourself are following. It appears immedi-

ately in front of your eyes with each step, and you make no effort as you walk forward.

That is what gives *value* to these words—these concepts.

The happiest way you can follow your own road is by leaving behind all concepts. They are no longer needed in order for you to continue Selfward, unimpeded and in a concept-free manner, which is the freedom that you have sought all along.

You simply live the freedom that you inherently are.

* * *

Making your way through this Course, what you will come to see is that dispelling concepts is the most important work of your lifetime.

When one hears “work,” the mind tends to immediately pair it with the word “hard.” (Did you do that?) These two words come hand in hand throughout most cultures today. Self-Inquiry reveals that in fact the hardest work in life is created by our holding onto and carrying around concepts. It eventually becomes obvious that these activities of *holding onto* and *carrying around* have been completely unnecessary all along! Believing our concepts to be true was built on the conditioning of the mind and body, on the repetitive messages we received via our sense perceptions and the patterns of thinking that arose as a result.

To practice in a manner that allows you to let go of concepts—to literally stop carrying them around—is the most blissful, effortless, enriching and intelligent work you can possibly engage in. When you practice with the earnest purpose of investigating into the true nature of yourself, all the way, your earnestness essentially reverses the feeling of effort and struggle in life. Rather, periods of required effort or momentary struggle that may arise in your day-to-day experience (as they inevitably do) are not really a problem anymore. The kind of effort and struggle that causes *suffering* falls away of its own accord, because you recognize yourself to be here, eternally, whether concepts appear to you or not. You become unmoved in the midst of mind activity, which is the mechanism of concept formation. Concepts cannot change, have never changed, and will never change your very nature of being forever here, present, whole, boundless, infinite.

Out of this recognition, you do not deny or reject the use of concepts in your everyday communication. Concepts are an integral aspect of our being in continuous and dynamic relationships with others, and through them life as we know it naturally unfolds in our households, workplaces and communities. You simply use them in a more authentic and skillful way. The concepts that arise in you are now grounded in your own peace. Whatever comes from peace cannot but share itself peacefully. It's a given!

Going forward in your reading, you will find I often rely on words that I immediately attempt to debunk as we go along, or at least I explain what makes them problematic when the mind gets hold of them and tries to “make something” out of their meanings. Concept formation is the hard work you will want to allow yourself to continue giving up, moment to moment. You can then remain aware of your nature of *being* reality, the non-conceptual eternal truth that this Course is always pointing you towards. Remaining aware in this manner will become easier and easier.

How much easier can *just being* be?

Reality is here and now. It does not require any words or images to be so. It is independent of any feeling of separateness. It is eternally present.

You *are* this.

When there is nothing left to know but yourself, “I am” reveals eternity. Inquiring into even “I am,” any concept of *I* or *beingness* disappears also. But in the midst of the disappearance of all concepts, you remain. Your real nature is the infinite totality of the moment itself. The moment’s totality wholly includes—and yet is entirely free of—appearances and disappearances.

This is how Self-Knowledge becomes manifest in your life.

CHAPTER 2:

Multiple Concepts, A Singular Wholeness

Your intrinsic wholeness has never been touched by anything you have thought or experienced. You can become aware of this. You have already felt this. This wholeness—this *thisness*—does not have any qualities, characteristics or reference points, yet that it exists cannot be challenged. “It” is “you,” and simultaneously everything “else.” It makes no distinction between you and *other than you*.

* * *

Let’s recall the last chapter. In your practice, the work of dispelling concepts means that whatever is being communicated here will eventually need to be dropped so you can abide fully and effortlessly as you are. Remember this!

The current chapter is going to offer up a lot of concepts. The purpose for doing so is to “set the mind straight” regarding the actual *size* of what it is we are investigating when we practice Self-Inquiry. These concepts will point towards an immensity that cannot possibly be grasped, yet can be recognized to be oneself in this precise moment—and can be lived. By the end of the Course, you might regard this chapter as a necessary but least important one.

Once when I was practicing with my Teacher, I heard him say: “Take the biggest possible concept, and *begin* there!” When you allow the biggest possible concept to be your “launching pad” in your practice, it means that any concept from then on is too small. Your practice can now reveal to you how immense, how ungraspable and how concept-free you actually are. Without Self-Inquiry, your own practice of directly *confirming* who you are, the big concepts endeavouring to take you there (here!) have no lasting value.

* * *

Throughout the ages, multitudes of big concepts have pointed towards what we are looking at in this Course. Some of them may already be familiar to you. Below I briefly give you a few examples, as a way of conveying that they all point towards the same thing: what it is that’s *actually* here right now. I have chosen the words “never-ending wholeness” in an attempt to describe this, but these words are just a matter of taste and preference; certainly, drawing in a few of the other big concepts can also help to illuminate what I am trying to express.

So, now for a snapshot. Some of the big concepts that have been used to refer to what is actually here include (deep breath):

God, the Holy Spirit, the Tao, Truth, True Nature, the Universe, Eternity, Infinity, Universal Life, Siva/Shiva,

Allah, Pure Consciousness, Silent Awareness, Everlasting Peace, the Absolute, Buddha Mind, No Mind, the Empty Field, Egolessness, the Noumenon, the Mystery, the Animating Force, Brahman, your Original Face, the Self, the No-Self, Enlightenment, Emptiness, the Totality, Reality, I AM, Existence, Beingness, the Void, Unity, Advaita (“Not Two”), the Kingdom of Heaven, Nirvana, the Supreme Godhead, the Cosmic Essence, Unconditional Love... and many, many others!

(Exhale.)

You have seen from this list that the names are drawn from diverse traditions, cultures and ways of understanding what is true. You will even notice some contradictions in terms; words that are direct opposites of each other, such as Self and No-Self, stand as equal pointers towards what is actually here. But it must be repeated that they are all just big concepts attempting to convey the same thing, which is beyond every concept. More importantly, if you continue to remember that ultimately only your own clear understanding can take you directly to a place inside yourself in which all contradiction or paradox falls away, you’re heading in the right direction. In your willingness to remain open and receptive, the deepest truths arise from within you—not from any concept, culture or tradition.

Not from any other source but your own *immediate* nature.

* * *

If you put your attention now on the word “wholeness,” you can discover whether it is possible to conceive of something missing inside of it. Try it right here. There is simply nothing missing or lacking, correct? Wholeness cannot be made more whole, nor can it have its wholeness reduced in any way. Its completeness and perfection derive from its very nature of *being* whole.

When we think of an *individual something* as whole, we can imagine that thing as having some sort of boundary or end point within which its wholeness is contained. In this same manner of thinking, we can also visualize a *something else* in relation to that whole thing—a different thing that has its own quality of being more or less whole.

But wholeness itself is not subject to separation, division or relativity of any kind. It leaves nothing out. Everything it encompasses is its own exact, complete essence of wholeness. It is ubiquitous, universal. If you take a “part” out of wholeness, wholeness remains as wholeness and the part continues to exist as a result of the wholeness it is already made up of. As such, a part of wholeness cannot actually go anywhere. It has no *independent* existence. If you get right down to it, you can see that there could never have been a part of wholeness, because wholeness always remains the same. Partness was just an “appearance” within wholeness. In other

words, partness was always only ever wholeness itself.

Attempting to figure all this out with the mind is the way that partness tries to decipher the wholeness of its inherent nature. Do you see the impossibility of this? Wholeness is indivisible and totally free of all boundary lines. No definition or mental construct can contain its freedom.

Moment to moment, wholeness is the way things are.

* * *

Something quite wonderful is occurring at this stage of our human story. We are now developing a *quantum* understanding of reality, based on mathematical principles (and backed by discoveries in astronomy and molecular biology as well as other fields of natural science), to reflect and confirm what the greatest saints and sages ever known have been telling us all along.

Essentially, we are coming to understand that the only thing here is infinity in all directions.

Looking into a telescope, you know that “the universe” spreads out before you without any identifiable end point. Your looking may reveal all sorts of mind-blowing phenomena: planets and stars, sunspots, nebulas, comets, meteor showers, black holes and galaxies. As you look, and in each moment, the Earth is hurtling through space in its orbit of our Sun at about 67,000

miles per hour. This figure does not even take into account the speed of the Earth's rotation or the speed with which our solar system is rotating in the Milky Way (490,000 mph or something crazy like that). Yet because of gravity, we and everything else here are held "in place"! These forces and the unfathomable power behind them are almost unspeakable. Countless billions of light years are in operation, simultaneously in this very instant, engendering a perpetual multiplicity of cosmic events.

Being aware of these unbelievable forces, it becomes evident that this activity of the universe extends forever. Whatever you *cannot* see is here, too, the immensity of which exceeds far beyond what can be observed, detected or measured.

This is a pretty huge realization!

Looking through a microscope to the inside of your body or that of any other sentient life form, you can perceive an equally mind-blowing universe. Bearing witness to the intricate diversity and complexities of the living organism bestows an awe that is unsurpassed. And we also know that the stronger the capability of the microscope, the more we can see of what's really going on in there. Increasing our magnification of what we are able to view *on the inside* reveals there is also no end to life going in this direction, in the very same way there is no

end when a telescope is pointed “outwards.” Inside and outside, there is only infinite space.

The big question is: “What is ‘the looker’ in all of this?”

Where is he/she? *Who* is the one looking through the telescope or the microscope? Is not the very possibility of our beginning to observe and confirm this huge mind-blowing reality—through advances in technology and scientific understanding—a function of infinity itself? Can something other than infinity be looking at infinity? What is the delineation between “inside” and “outside”? Is infinity not discovering the vastness, the limitlessness, the immensity, the beauty and wonder of *its own* nature?

If this is true, where does infinity begin and end in you? Can there be somewhere in which you are *not* in this discovery?

Can you yourself be other than infinity? Other than wholeness?

Is this not simply reality as it is?

* * *

Infinity literally means “never-ending.” Therefore, infinity has constant never-endingness as its nature. So in this moment, it is seamless. It has no demarcations or limits. Our adopted definitions and beliefs—our concepts—are responsible for imposing an *apparent* limit on infinity.

But apparent limits are fundamentally untrue. In mathematical terms, this means that no matter what number you think of infinity as being, it is always at least one more. No matter what size you perceive it to be, it is always bigger.

Since infinity already exists as never-endingness, it is only our continual discovery of observable aspects of it that can make us think of it as expanding. The collective learning and knowledge of humankind deepens through our evolutionary development. But knowledge is the same as infinity in the sense that all there is to know already exists; we are simply uncovering more and more of this fact, through the passage of time. What expands is just our apprehension of it—our confirmation. This process does not actually change anything, however. The knowledge of everything everywhere is already complete.

Whenever something “new” gets added to the knowledge bank in which we store our cumulative evaluation of infinity’s immensity, we can fall into the trap of imagining this new concept is somehow better at capturing what is inherently uncontainable. Infinity is too immediate, too free and too all-encompassing to be grasped in any description or process of categorization.

Within infinity, every concept that has ever been and will ever be conceived of arises and disintegrates. Infinity is that *by which* all concepts can appear, without

exception, and it remains here unaffected when they disappear again—as they inevitably do. Infinity is already everything. It is already one never-ending wholeness. And it forever expresses the immediacy of “what is.” Reality is simply, exactly this truth.

Can there be anything *else* here but this?

* * *

Clearly, what I am pointing to is not a place we can reach. Never-ending wholeness is always only *here*, complete and perfect. Our error lies in trying to put a fixed value on it in order to understand it. (Please don't misinterpret my words as a rejection of the importance of scientific study and advancement.) The concept-forming mechanism—the mind, which can be none other than infinity itself—is constantly working hard to grasp reality as it is. This creates a feeling of struggle, inside. We imagine ourselves as separate from reality, learning *about* it or needing to attain it in order to find happiness. Meanwhile, here is reality, all the time! What concept does never-ending wholeness require? Does it say something about itself?

Finally, and blissfully, we are able to let go of the need to know.

* * *

A profoundly beautiful by-product of what our inquiry into this truth reveals is an ever-deepening recognition of the constant, spontaneous, moment-to-moment infinite infinity—the unchanging wholeness of life itself. By inwardly investigating and confirming for ourselves the never-endingness that’s here, which we do by not trying to contain or limit the immediate moment in any concept, we inevitably deepen into an “ah-ha” acknowledgement of reality as it is and the obviousness of *being* exactly this, ourselves.

This recognition is Self-Recognition, which is also known as Self-Realization. It is important, however, that I explain a little bit about the concept of Self-Realization. In my own experience and through what I observe in others seeking to understand the truth, this concept (like every concept!) can cause a lot of difficulty. Taking some layers off this well-dressed idea will also be of help as we transition into the next chapter.

* * *

We have confirmed that infinity, or never-ending wholeness, is the true nature of reality. This means, it is always real. Forever. What’s real is real is real. One cannot make reality more real than it already is. However, our thinking process—the mind’s concept-forming function—has been doing a pretty good job of trying to make real what is unreal for aeons. That is, most of us spend most of our lives imagining concepts to be true.

We try to make permanent what is innately impermanent: the experiences, images and feelings that arise and dissolve within the always present infinity that we are. In other words, the diverse forms that in fact are only *temporary appearances* of infinity are what we're typically fixating our attention on, but not on infinity itself. This causes suffering, and so finally we begin to search in earnest for release from suffering. Through study and practice, we come across words like "Self-Realization," "enlightenment" and "awakening," which lead to an investigation inside ourselves of whatever hope or promise these words may represent for us.

The idea of *becoming* Self-Realized can only ever complicate your effortless abidance as reality itself. You are always real. You cannot become what you already are. There is nothing you can do to make yourself reach infinity, because it is *already established* as the eternal nature of your own Self. You are only ever infinite; by default you are inseparable from the immediate reality as it is. But what you can come to realize is that you have been making real that which is unreal. When you let go of thinking the unreal to be real, your natural, normal Self-Recognition of being a singular never-ending wholeness is spontaneously available. The immensity of this truth illuminates your awareness of your true identity.

The "unreal thinking" that may be covering up your recognition of your eternal nature could look something like the thought, "I am separate from infinity." As we

have already confirmed in the current chapter, this kind of thinking is incorrect. It simply isn't factual. Everything that appears is only just infinity appearing as itself in form. That means, all your thoughts, all your feelings, your body, your relationships, the constantly changing circumstances of your life and everything else arise as events perceived within you. Every ounce of meaning you can invest in any of these things is also arising within you—within never-ending wholeness. Your *being* is the source of it all.

When you recognize this, you recognize the real as the real and the unreal as the unreal. Recognizing what is unreal does not mean you begin to reject or resist forms and appearances, because these are also yourself. In fact, it is only your investment or belief in them as true—when you forget to simultaneously regard them as simply temporary appearances of your own infinity—that *makes* them unreal. When you know that never-ending wholeness is the only thing here, you recognize that absolutely everything is forever just this, and you welcome forms and appearances as natural expressions of reality. They are all coming and going within your own wondrous, indivisible, and boundless cosmic freedom. Giving rise to forms and appearances is an inherent function of this freedom. So none of these have to be a problem anymore, nor do you become attached to them or try to keep them permanently with you, because this results in suffering. They all arise and dissolve in their own way—spontaneously, effortlessly... freely.

Self-Realization simply means you live with the understanding that Self and infinity are words for the same thing—the only thing here. You recognize *this alone* to be real; you know it as an absolute, unassailable fact. You see that what makes you authentic is your nature of being ever-present. Hereness itself is your unchanging natural essence. So Self-Realization is not a new “feature” that you add to yourself. Quite the contrary, you are only just recognizing what is, what has always been and can only ever be.

The reason I prefer the concept of Self-Recognition is because it has more immediacy to it, which is what this Course keeps pointing you to: your own immediate, ever-present, eternal nature. Your own never-ending wholeness.

Reality is real... and here... right now.

It cannot be in some other place or time. You *are* this, in this very moment and in every moment.

Are you able to recognize what I’m saying, yet?

I’ve already thrown out more concepts than I had intended to. Let’s move on!

CHAPTER 3:

Knowledge Must Directly Apply to the Whole

Infinity is another word for that which says “I” in you.

In this chapter, we’re going to leave behind the concept “never-ending wholeness”—which is a mouthful—and simply let *infinity*, *reality* or *life* be default words for what I am talking about. We now know that all these concepts are referring to the same thing, the *only* thing that’s here, which cannot be defined or grasped in any concept. Other terms I like are “ultimate truth” and “eternal nature.” However, I will keep reiterating that once you begin to confirm for yourself the deepest possible meaning of these concepts, in your practice you will *keep going forever* in this direction (the Selfward one), leaving behind any conclusions that someone else has relayed to you about it. Every conclusion that can be expressed through language is only a symbol for something infinitely brighter, more profound, more miraculous and more beautiful.

Confirming, confirming, confirming... deeper and deeper, eternally. You won’t arrive at a stopping point or an end to it all. This is the legacy of what you are.

So we are already moving into the realm of practice in this chapter. Practice and understanding are two sides

of the same coin. They cannot be separated. Strong understanding automatically leads to practicing Self-Inquiry in a clear, uncluttered, simple and direct way. You will find that the more your understanding of what is actually here saturates your being, the more your practice will deepen and expand—and vice versa.

* * *

I thought it interesting that when I looked up the word *direct* in the dictionary (the Great Book of Concepts – ha), the next two words to appear before me were “exact” and “immediate.” Presented in the form of an adverb, *directly* was defined as “at once” and “without delay.” I feel all four of these synonyms contain great relevance in the context of our application of the knowledge being conveyed here in words. Let’s devote ourselves to unpacking these ideas a bit.

From where you currently are on the path you walk in your investigation of truth, if you can choose to uncompromisingly pay attention only to those pointers that encourage you to look directly—exactly, immediately, at once and without delay—at yourself, your one-focused approach is going to save you a lot of time. “Direct pointers” are those that compel a truthful, genuine exploration of what you are, leaving no room for anything else but this. If you decisively wish to recognize, confirm and live the truth of yourself, you have to look *here*. Whatever you may think *about* what you are is not pre-

cise. That kind of “looking” is taking you elsewhere (which it has done for most of your lifetime, correct?). There is really no point in delaying your direct inquiry, which is the same as your immediate and exact looking, any longer.

Moment to moment, we are endowed with the fundamentally perfect and appropriate capacity to directly discover our eternal nature, the infinity that is here. Generally, however, because our conditioning has temporarily obscured this capacity with concepts, we expend our energy looking for answers outside of ourselves. In our search it can take time and discernment to sift through all the other, *indirect* methods that are presented to us as “means” of accessing our own direct apprehension of truth. These means tend to make us believe that our practice of confirming, appreciating and increasingly familiarizing ourselves with the immensity of life—the infinite wholeness of it, its wondrous peace, its beauty and omniscience, its inseparability from *what we are*—should be more complicated than it needs to be. Complicated, indirect methods diminish the full power we have available to us through our mutual contemplation of infinity, which is the only thing that can really matter due to its basic *nature* of being infinite, eternal and immediately, exactly here.

We can always hold profound respect for whatever teachings, techniques or methods have been presented to us while we walk our path forward. For many of us,

through years of practice our engagement with these means reflects a deepening process of maturation in our search to know the ultimate truth. Indirect methods appear in infinity like everything else. They arise in their own timely and unique way for each person; we may work with them for a while (or a long time) and then move on. Eventually, inside ourselves we arrive at the desire to accord directly with what is *actually* here. We wish to do so all at once, and without delay. At this time, indirect methods can lose their staying power. But they have all had their place in bringing us to where we currently are in our path. They serve us, as they lead to a focusing and a refinement of our investigation.

Once our attention is established firmly Selfward, different techniques or practices may continue to be part of our lives according to personal taste, and they are simply enjoyed and appreciated as marvelous, diverse expressions of life like all other things we experience. They are encompassed *within* our authentic looking at Self, within our respect for and celebration of the sovereign living truth.

* * *

The direct application of knowledge is not about any philosophy, method or technique. It is solely about you.

If you are receptive, earnest and passionate about confirming the nature of infinity as being the same nature as

what you are, you will need to *apply* the understanding that infinity is the only thing here—directly, to yourself. Your endeavour will become one of recognizing how boundless, how free, and how infinite the immediate moment is, and then investing that full recognition Selfward.

This investment is an endless, non-conceptual application of the ultimate, imperishable truth of your own being. That is, “prior to concepts” is the stance you take in your confirmation of that which is always here. You rest your attention in the immediacy of the moment—in the source of all things. Resting like this soon becomes effortless, and it allows your true nature to be self-revealing. It excludes nothing of your life or circumstances. Your devotion and your bliss are for this alone.

* * *

Let’s go back to remembering the immensity of the moment, the infinite *size* of the whole of reality right now. In all directions, there is nothing but infinity. The word infinity points to the inconceivable, unfathomable, miraculous, indivisible, seamless, never-ending existence of the only thing that’s here. In this precise instant, it is impossible that any of the billions of tiny microscopic cells spinning in the universe you call “my body” could be separate from the atoms spinning in some as-yet undetected and unidentified astronomical “body” billions of galaxies away. If we investigate closely, we real-

ize that there can actually not even be any *distance* involved at all, because the moment is always ever an expression of wholeness—which leaves nothing apart from itself. It is simultaneously local and non-local.

Are any dividing lines possible in this immensity?

No. The same essence has to be spinning as everything, seen and unseen. Whatever differences we perceive are only appearances that occur to us because of our sensory faculties, which are *also* an expression of the whole infinite moment. This is the eternal truth.

So with this we keep in mind the huge “stage” within which our inquiry into reality is occurring. If our investigation is pivoting around the habitual mental assumption of being somehow separate, or of being “just my body,” we are unable to engage in the important work of confirming and reconfirming reality as it is. Truthful Self-Inquiry is not possible in this manner. Via such an approach we attempt to arrive at the truth through indirect means; the normal, natural flow of life becomes distorted by a search based in our conditioned thoughts and feelings. These cause us to imagine—to literally hallucinate—that what we’re looking for is to be found in some external or future source. Out of a contracted state of searching, the ever-present immense reality is not attended to, and things as they are in their simplicity and immediacy cannot be apperceived moment by moment.

You are not something small.

What *are* small are the concepts we spend our lives holding onto and carrying around, which for the most part appear as variations of the central themes “me,” “my” and “mine.” Without exception, these concepts give rise to all the rest. A marking characteristic of our individual and collective thinking processes is an unquestioned belief in the *I-other* dichotomy, which becomes the predominant (and illusory!) tension governing our view of what reality is. This tension effectively represents the root of humanity’s suffering. Living from this tension, we feel fragmented, constricted, separate... small.

All the while, here is this immense, limitless, cosmic stage of reality. What we call “I” and “other” are equally of its own essence, which means that in truth it makes no distinction between I and other. The substratum of every distinction—of every apparent difference—is infinity’s essence of sameness, existing in and as all things simultaneously everywhere.

Right now, if you directly apply this knowledge Selfward, all at once and leaving out nothing, you will unconditionally recognize and admit to a primary, indisputable fact: *Everything is yourself.*

This is what is meant by the direct application of knowledge. This is Self-Knowledge. But it does not stop

at any idea of “having” Self-Knowledge. What it implies is that your Selfward-Facing Way has become established; the direction of your looking becomes one-pointed, inside. The unlimited freedom of the complete here-and-now moment is where your awareness continuously rests. Your own infinity extends forever and allows your practice to become ever more direct, subtle, clear and concept-free. Practicing like this reveals that the immensity of life can never be challenged, is ever-available, true, real, and lives you in love.

Soon, it is luminously self-evident that all beings are lived by the same love that you are. An unconditional reality is here, living the resplendent wholeness of itself. The “I” in you and in all beings is a singular, vast, all-inclusive oneness.

* * *

Arising spontaneously within infinity is the universal concept “I.” Currently, over seven billion people are inhabiting the Planet, saying “I” in our various human languages. Innumerable billions of other creatures are here, too, enacting their I-ness in their own way. In Self-Inquiry, we can contemplate whether it is possible for each one of these billions of beings to arise from *separate sources*. If so, what are they, and where do they reside?

Could every individual body be self-contained as its own distinct source? No. Bodies are made of a collection of

inert elements. Something has to be present as the “glue” that gives birth to us, grows and develops us, keeps the heart pumping and the lungs breathing, the food digesting and the neurons firing. Something inconceivably miraculous is that *by which* we think and feel, by which we can perceive anything at all. By which we wash the dishes and brush our teeth. By which all our doing *happens*. By which we have “good days” and “bad days.” By which absolutely everything appears and dissolves.

Could there be some “higher power” somewhere, taking care of all this from some far-off place? No. If the power living your body right now resided elsewhere, the collection of inert elements you call *me* would be insentient, lifeless. It would be devoid of consciousness and awareness. It is this great power that makes possible your reading of these words. Not distinguishing between individual bodies, and without an identifiable beginning point or end point, life is playing itself out. Something is here, ever-present... animating all of this. It has to be living you, in this moment and every moment. It has to be the moment itself. It has to be you.

This same something has to be that *into which* each collection of inert elements returns at the moment we call death. But is there ultimately any form of diminishment, reduction or loss in this return? Could there be “death” to that which has remained here prior to, during and after the formation of any individual collection of inert elements? To that which creates and recreates these el-

elements in an uninterrupted, unceasing diversity of life forms? To that which must clearly be the universal source of this whole mind-blowing phenomenon? Can even the “inert elements” being lived by this be other than this?

What is it that gives life to our living? What is not augmented or reduced by any individual sense of “I”? Not subject to birth, decay or death? Not subject to change in the least?

The answer to these questions, which cannot come in the form of any concept, reveals itself when we look directly to the source of our sense of I-ness. That is, we inquire into the non-conceptual eternal nature that is our true being, moment by moment—before we even say the word “I.”

This is the real I. This is who you are.

* * *

The direct application of knowledge in Self-Inquiry means that you commit to increasingly familiarizing yourself with your eternal nature, not just with the temporary phenomena that come and go within the eternal.

The latter kind of familiarization has been going on inside us since we were children. After we become attached to the word “I,” everything else follows, leading to a smaller and smaller sense of self; we identify with

whatever markers or characteristics the mind tags onto our I-ness. Essentially, we *think* ourselves, repeating thoughts about what we are over and over again throughout our waking lives. And due to constant repetition we believe them. We don't double-check the source of our thinking.

My Teacher says: "I am" is the perfect starting point of inquiry, but "I am *this* or *that*" causes big problems.

He also points out that the great tragedy of the human experience is the word which typically arises after the word "I": *want*. Our minds all too often become contaminated with the idea that something is perpetually missing, and we look to external conditions or objects in the hope of finding a way to resolve this void. But of course, it never works. Fundamentally, the only true missing thing is the recognition that what is here prior to all imagination of lack is ever complete, whole, boundless, and free. What is actually doing the imagining is itself so free that natural everyday human desires are included and accommodated like everything else, but until we are in touch with this truth our wanting clouds our freedom and causes suffering. We are rarely taught to look in the Selfward direction, and so we overlook the possibility of putting an end to the erroneous thinking at the root of suffering.

Looking Selfward entails an intimate investigation of that which is continuously here before the word "I" ever

appears. What is found in your looking comes to be recognized as the same infinity that is also equally here *when* a sense of I-ness arises in you and *after* it dissolves. However, to clearly confirm the ultimate truth for yourself without a shadow of a doubt, taking a stance of “prior to” is the most helpful. Your purpose is to become familiar with the actual, authentic, immediate source that the word “I” refers to.

What is the nature of your am-ness before you identify yourself as *this* or *that*? Laying aside every concept you have about who you are, right now, who are you?

Direct practice reveals what is left over when all concepts are dropped. Here and now, you can discover your own source as the same indivisible unity animating the totality of the cosmos in all directions. “What is left over” is what has always been and can never not be. It is the pre-existent, changeless reality—everlasting life. In Self-Inquiry, you learn to let the immediate moment be exactly the way it is, without *adding something* like the word “I.” To be here, you don’t need this word, or any word. You don’t need any image of yourself. With or without “I,” everything everywhere is simply, authentically, unmistakably just here... just *this*.

Your hereness is the infinite, immaculate source of all. And you come to know this by being it. By knowing nothing *about* it. Your willingness to be your immediate being without adding this or that brings you Home.

Here, you abide as your eternal Self.

* * *

When earnest Self-Inquiry arises in a person's life, generally it is because she or he is tired of feeling small and separate. Feelings of smallness and separateness are synonymous with suffering. So we always take with us into our practice the remembrance of the immensity that is here, moment to moment. This remembrance is what allows you to completely let go into what you actually are, which is this immensity. Same same.

When your Selfward "letting go" becomes the simple and continuous direction of your living, even remembrance itself is not really required. Rather, your Self-Inquiry is like a beacon illuminating your way of life and takes the place of needing to remember "something." It all happens automatically; there is no time or distance, no effort involved. Letting go brings great joy, comfort and peace, so you naturally lose interest in going in a direction that creates a feeling of smallness by forming more concepts about an imagined separate self.

Through your direct application of the truth and your ongoing confirmation of your eternal nature, what you come to realize is that the idea of being separate was always only a case of mistaken identity. This did not ever alter your "true identity" in any way, but the illusion was convincing nonetheless. What normally takes time

and practice, after you acknowledge this fact, is becoming consciously *established* in your true identity so the tendency to get caught up in the illusion can be completely given up. As practice deepens, that is, the illusory appearances within infinity lose their convincing hold inside of you.

The illusion may have been running on automatic pilot for decades in your life. As I referred to in the first chapter, being conditioned into the illusion happens innocently and from a very young age, without our yet having the sophistication developmentally to reflect upon and question this conditioning. By accepting innocence as an unavoidable foundation upon which our mistaken identities were built, we can have great patience for ourselves when we practice Self-Inquiry.

My Teacher likes to refer to the practice of Self-Inquiry as analogous to “deleting useless data from your hard drive.” We all grow up “downloading” information from others and the world around us. Much of this information is helpful, and necessary. We need it to develop our full personhood. The learning process is about survival and the creative possibilities of mind, which have evolutionary significance. But through a life of accumulating concepts about what we are and mistaking them for the truth, eventually we become earnest about uncluttering our consciousness as we develop one-pointed vision on our Selfward-Facing Way. We recognize that the clutter of our mental conditioning is like a veil blan-

keting over the pure, infinite freedom of our eternal nature.

For those of us with minds that have been conditioned in this manner (99% of us, at least!), matching patience with determination and perseverance in practice is also very important. Patience without determination breeds stagnation, and determination without patience breeds rigidity. In stagnation, the energy we have to apply—in an ongoing manner—the knowledge that “infinity alone is here” loses its directness and precision. In rigidity, we are unable to allow the natural process of relaxing and letting go, which are inevitable companions in our confirmation of *what we truly are*, to take its own course.

Striking a healthy balance between patience and determination when you practice Self-Inquiry is the most effective approach to maintaining your direct application of Self-Knowledge in the midst of the infinite moment. Your conviction that what you are *is* the infinite moment cannot be challenged then. From unshakable conviction, the concepts that previously deluded you with separateness and smallness merge in your omniscient, immense, ever-established Selfhood.

In the peace of deep conviction, your true identity spontaneously shines.

With this very big understanding, you may then ask what you are to *do* with the illusion you have been living with all this time. There are two answers to that question. The first answer is: “Nothing.” Trying to do something about the illusion—to manipulate, fix or enhance it—is all an avoidance of the real issue. This doing is activity of mind based in a small, separate idea of self. Working with the illusion is not going to help you.

Illusion is illusion. Period.

The second answer is: “You unclutter yourself.” You commit to deleting all the useless data off your hard drive so that your eternal nature can shine clear and bright. You honestly and genuinely investigate what the word “I” refers to when you think it, not adding *this* or *that*. You face squarely Selfward and keep going in the same direction to ascertain what is actually here.

This is how illusion falls away. This is “looking Selfward.” And it can only proceed from the immediate moment. There is no other time or place you can go to confirm the ultimate truth. The only direct, precise, exact application of knowledge in all the galaxies is that which occurs *here*, in you. Maintaining patience, determination and persistence, with great curiosity and humility, you look to the here-and-now source within which “you” are arising.

What you encounter is inconceivable, and yet it becomes abidingly self-evident. You recognize that infinity alone says “I” in you, in everyone and everything. Infinity is the eternal *subject*, with nothing secondary to itself.

In this way you accord with your true nature and live from your direct experience of the sole reality—indistinguishable from yourself. The deep, unimpeded, radiant understanding that arises from direct practice is the joyous investment of your lifetime.

In you, Self-Knowledge may look something like this:

I am the boundless, seamless, infinite ever-present Whole. My being includes everything existing and not existing, everything seen and unseen, the formed and the formless. I have no division or separation. My body appears in this, as does every other body. All my thoughts, feelings and experiences are seen as appearances of Myself. I express simultaneously as the most extraordinary and the most ordinary. I am the pure potential of the Moment. Here-ness and Nowness are my ever-established qualities. The past, present and future are only symbols of time passing, within my Timeless Essence. Birth and death cannot touch me. Before, during and after every birth and death cycle, I AM.

Life Itself is my Eternal Nature. There is only Infinity here in all directions, neither to be realized nor attained. I am This Alone.

* * *

And these are all just written concepts on a white background.

Who can confirm the truth of them but you?

Who could be the sole one responsible for the direct application of Self-Knowledge apart from the one reading these words in this very moment?

CHAPTER 4: Self-Inquiry is the Whole's Business

Infinity's own "letting go" dissolves all mistaken identities.

This chapter of the Course is an attempt to describe the process of Self-Inquiry through the eyes of the very big understanding you now have. Leading into Chapter 5, this will be everything you need to establish your practice from a very blissful, effortless place inside yourself. I suggest you move as slowly as you can through this chapter, because the semantics of it are very subtle. In essence, it is the intrinsic subtlety of the understanding that allows you to practice in a concept-free way. This is not a cognitive or mental approach, and yet for the purpose of evoking a direct apperception of the truth within you, the challenges inherent to the use of language-based points of reference are required.

* * *

The strongest foundation of understanding you can bring to your practice is:

“Infinity (or some other equally big concept)
is the only thing here.

Therefore,
I myself have to be *exactly this*, too.”

With this foundation, what needs to be surrendered to is the fact that Self-Inquiry can only be undertaken by infinity itself, which is your real nature. There is no separate “you” to do it. Since only one thing exists, this thing does everything. The concept of *your* doing something makes for complicated, indirect practice, because this kind of thinking produces the idea that there is something to get (or get rid of) or somewhere to go. You now know that the concept of a separate someone to get something or go somewhere is an illusion. You are already ever-established as the one reality—indivisible, infinite and free.

Within the absolute freedom of infinity there are forces of expansion and contraction creating and recreating energy in a vast cosmic arena. You and I appear as a reflection of this play of energy. Infinity’s freedom has given rise to the idea of a separate self, and this same freedom dissolves it. Why mistaken identity occurs in infinity as a by-product of contraction in the human mind—why infinity believes its own hallucination of being a separate, individual “me”—no one can ever say. It is all a great, incomprehensible mystery. If we go back to the analogy given in Chapter 2, we know that our trying to figure out the *why*’s is how “partness” strives to decipher the wholeness of itself. It is like an eye turning backwards to catch a glimpse of what it looks like, which it cannot do! This is a very effortful struggle that does not produce any concrete results.

In Self-Inquiry, all this striving is given up. You could say that, in you, infinity wants to completely let go of its own illusion in order to resume its boundless, eternal immediacy. But you have to be careful here, because when I say “infinity wants to...” this imposes a human interpretation of meaning on what by nature is free of all that. I am of course not referring to a definable entity that could have knowable intentions. The trouble is that we are very limited in our use of language to convey what’s really going on.

What these words aim to illuminate is in essence a *tacit* understanding arising in the wholeness of infinity itself, which is not reserved only for a “you” or an “I.” Such a tacit understanding is a spontaneous occurrence, in the same way that absolutely everything else is. It is all a totally *impersonal* happening. When we speak of these matters from a human standpoint, which we inevitably must, we can acknowledge that the personal aspect cannot be avoided in our communication about them. This is the beauty and the challenge in being as direct as possible in the pointing towards what is actually here, and in the encouragement to stay just with this.

* * *

Infinity’s immediate nature is devoid of everything personal. Whatever we *feel* to be personal cannot touch the omniscience of the immense reality as it is, which is the only thing operating each moment, impersonally. The

contraction we experience around personal thoughts and feelings eventually compels us to investigate their validity; intuitively, we know there must be something more here than the sense of smallness these produce inside us.

In most traditions throughout the world people look to a “higher power” for delivery from suffering. When one feels small, considerable solace and comfort can be found in the belief that an external agent of grace, compassion and benevolence will eventually bring peace. All the while, the everlasting peace that is sought is already the very nature of the one who seeks it, and it is available moment to moment as oneself. The highest power—the only *real* power—is the fullness of life expressing itself in and as each instant. This expression infuses the sense of I-ness in all beings everywhere. It is the pre-existing reality that makes all of this possible. Your unlimited true nature has nothing external to itself and is already overflowing with grace, compassion and benevolence. When you lay aside your attachment to concepts, these “qualities” just naturally exude themselves without effort.

So imagining infinity as an object “out there” (something *other than* what you are) needs to be dropped in order to familiarize yourself with the immensity of the sole infinite reality. The title of this chapter, “Self-Inquiry is the Whole’s Business,” is for the purpose of supporting your understanding that the confirmation of life’s never-endingness is not enacted by any individual. Linguist-

ically, we are forced to rely on the first, second and third person when we speak, which creates an apparent distinction between *I*, *you* and *that*. But all of these words arise from and point back to the one subject, free of all objectification.

In Self-Inquiry, the thinking mind that projected the separate “I” into infinity—and subsequently sought an additional object to resolve the feeling of separation—is let go of. All of that activity literally recedes backwards to where it came from, and infinity abides in its original totality, here. What you thought you were is reabsorbed into the heart of oneness... into what you actually are.

Infinity *alone* inquires, infinity *alone* lets go, and infinity *alone* abides. This recognition is the wondrous freedom that is waiting for you, here and now.

* * *

Genuine, direct Self-Inquiry is the process by which infinity initiates a spontaneous dissolution of its own tendency to contract around an individualized feeling of “I.” Through the release of I-ness as only a temporary appearance whose real nature is impersonal wholeness, the infinite moment purely and authentically expresses itself. This process is similar to what occurs at the moment of death, when the life force of every sentient being is surrendered. Nothing personal endures following that moment. But having given rise to a body and

living as that particular physical form, the whole is unaffected once the life span of the body form has exhausted itself. The life that forever *is* continues on in new and different forms.

Practicing Self-Inquiry, the opportunity is to live from this recognition now and for the rest of your lifetime, through infinity's own life force—exactly as *you* are. Your true life is the causeless source of all forms. It is already overflowing with the endless, undying fullness of itself.

* * *

The fear of death is very pervasive in the collective human psyche. When we die, nothing will remain by which to “know” ourselves. We lose all features of our particular identity as a particular person: our body, our name, our relationships, our histories, our successes and failures, our personalities, our gender. Every *thing* is lost at death. And due to our unquestioned attachment to all of these things as markers of who or what we are, the ideas we carry about the inevitable loss of them in death engender great fear of voidness, and the possibility of non-existence.

What is generally not contemplated in the lives of most people is that during the 24-hour cycle of everyone's normal living, the same loss of all identifying qualities occurs each night in *deep sleep*. When you stop dream-

ing and transition into deep sleep, you “drop off” absolutely everything you are aware of when you are awake. In that state you have no reference points by which to know yourself. There is no *I* or *other* in all of existence. There is only peace. When you wake in the morning, you “pick up” your body again, along with everything you think of as *my life*. The one who slept deeply was there as just peace alone; and then awakening, this same one adopts and identifies all that is perceived through the sensory faculties—calling those things “me.” This process is universal, the same for each person everywhere.

How could the one who slept free of all concepts not be the same one who gets up and begins the day of ever-changing life events? How could the concept-free sleeper be different from the awake one, washing dishes and brushing teeth, going to work and attending to family life and friendships? How could the peace of being without concepts not be available at any given moment to the one who automatically relinquishes all of them, every single night?

* * *

The reason that Self-Inquiry occurs in the waking state is because in sleep there is not enough consciousness for the infinite reality to become fully aware of the wondrous, inherently unalterable peace of itself. This is very important to understand when establishing practice in your life. Many people ask: “If infinity is the only

thing here, why bother practicing?" The answer may be obvious at this stage of the Course. For you to resume the purity, freedom and immediacy of your eternal nature—to live from the knowledge that infinity and yourself are one and the same—a conscious, doubtless recognition of this ultimate truth is called for.

The waking state is the period in our 24-hour cycle when the most consciousness is available to us for Self-Inquiry. It is also the period when we experience the most doubt.

Whatever doubts we have are due to our misidentification with the temporary forms and appearances arising in our own infinity, which are not here in deep sleep. Practice is a golden opportunity to take advantage of being awake and conscious to seek the source of whatever thoughts or sensations arise in the moment. In this way, one can become familiar with abidance in the field of peace that is the substratum of them all: the imperishable ground of being. Whether forms are seen or not, peace is eternally present and ever available.

When through Self-Inquiry the freedom of living without constant fixation on a separate sense of "I" is known in the waking state, peace is recognized to be the unbroken current of infinity's own nature—here identically in waking, dreaming and deep sleep, in life and in death. Laying aside all concepts about what you are, you have the capacity to be willing to lose *everything* for the discovery of what cannot be lost. All-pervasive, un-

characterized being can never be extinguished by any state or cause. The unmoving, unchanging source is playing itself out moment by moment through all the cosmos, without end.

* * *

Looking with these “eyes” in Self-Inquiry, from this vantage point it is clear that not only is there no possible end; infinity has no beginning point, either. If you tried to determine a place or time in evolution when you came into existence, you would be forced to undertake an infinite regression analysis. Did you begin when you had your first thought? Did you begin when you were born as a baby? When you were conceived? No, that’s not far enough back. When the sperm and egg that carried the DNA now expressing as your body were in two separate bodies, you had to have been here. At one time you were manifesting as sperm and egg, and now you are manifesting as a person. These are only different forms of the same *you* existing in all of manifestation’s unending diversity. You are infinity’s own perpetual fertility, organizing and reorganizing itself in form. The freedom that you *are* is the infinite process of living and dying as everyone and everything.

Your real nature was never born and cannot die.

So from the vast perspective we discussed in Chapter 2 regarding infinity’s spatial never-endingness (infinity

extends “outwards” and “inwards” in all directions), we can realize that the same principle applies to our idea of time. Mentally, you can look back and double-check any instant of your life to discover what has never not been here. The same changeless moment gives rise to all change, all experience. What we call past, present and future are only concepts, having apparent reality because of memory and the serial process of thought. But when we inquire honestly and authentically, we are able to see the unreal nature of a mind that relies upon memory and serial thinking to validate its I-ness. Such a mind has conceived a house of cards. What is actually here is timeless, boundless space, absent of beginnings and endings.

All times, all space, all directions and all dimensions are an expression of the one infinite, continuously present, limitless reality.

* * *

Self-Inquiry can *only be* a function of the whole, for and by itself. The “you” that you think you are is nothing; it is forever changing and therefore without permanent substance. From a belief in that small illusory apparition, the knowledge of the ultimate truth of yourself cannot flower. The package of cells and elements that makes up your body-mind mechanism is a tiny blip, a reflection somewhere in the infinity of endless galaxies.

A blip does not have the capacity to know itself as the totality of everything, everywhere.

Your entire life from cradle to grave arises and dissolves in a timeless universe. The Earth, and everything that happens on it, is a grain of sand amidst countless trillions of cosmic beaches—all in continuous operation *now*. The immensity of that, the boundlessness of that and the non-conceptual nature of that is the unimaginable power that is brought to bear on inquiry into the eternal nature of the Self.

Through the process of Self-Inquiry, the Whole inquires into its own immortal never-ending actuality in order to “know” itself as this. So when you practice, whatever form you see yourself as will have to leave the stage. Do you hold a mirror in front of your eyes to know that you are? What is forever whole and unchanging *cannot be seen*. Your formless *beingness* is pre-existent to any forms that arise in you as thought. Everything you see is already this formless beingness at the core. Eventually, you will recognize that all thoughts and feelings, all images and sounds are passing through an infinite field of peace—of presence. Before any thought ever occurred to you, before you were just sperm and egg destined to become a human animal, infinity's eternal being was your true nature. This same nature has lived you every instant of your life, is here now, and will be here always.

Moving into the final chapter of this volume of the Course, you will become aware of the fact that practice in the life of a person can happen with tremendous ease and surrender. When you “locate” the essential beingness of yourself in the immediate moment, and recognize this to be the non-negotiable, irrefutable truth of what is real, there is absolutely nothing for you to do. There is no need for “not doing,” either. All conceivable pairs of opposites—like doing and not doing, being and non-being, I and other, living and dying—merge in the spontaneous, natural, moment to moment flow of existence. You relax completely into this, because you trust that nothing can ever happen to you. Nor can you go anywhere.

Infinity, your own Self, is always everywhere simultaneously. All of life is permeated and saturated by the Whole. In you, in the waking state and in all states, infinity can know the wholeness of itself.

This is Self-Knowledge in effortless expression, every moment, as “I.”

CHAPTER 5:

Concept-Free Practice is Your Freedom

Self-Inquiry leads to the culmination and the end of conceptualization about the ultimate truth.

Your eternal nature spontaneously *proclaims* itself if, inside, you just say nothing about it and remain attentive. You cannot miss it. The simplicity and directness of the practice of authentic Self-Inquiry “gives you” this. It takes you Home. If you have read this volume with a wide open heart and mind, and continue in this manner through the last chapter, you will not even need the volume on *Practice*. When the understanding is complete, practice is spontaneous and automatic. The second part of this Course is an elaboration on the more subtle aspects of Self-Inquiry, which you will already be confirming for yourself through your own simple, direct practice. The magnificent vastness of your immediate infinity is a far more fascinating study than anything that could be written down throughout the entire world.

Practice makes you *fall in love* with this.

Once your attention is directed to an earnest investigation of the immediate, ever-present nature of reality, nothing anyone has said about it compares to what your inquiry reveals: grace, boundless love, total fulfillment and beyond. You will realize that this is all you have ever

wanted or yearned for, and there is no end to the bliss you feel as you let go with ever more certainty into it—dropping every concept as it appears. Bliss arises through your surrender to the freedom of your exact, natural Self.

You will not need to go to any other source to confirm what you are. In fact, ultimately you cannot. You alone can become the authority in this matter. The source of all confirmation resides in your own being.

* * *

The most direct route Home is the “path” that has been handed down to us from the great giants of Self-Inquiry who, throughout the ages, have attempted to convey the eternal truth for the benefit of others. On their shoulders we stand when we practice, and always the opportunity is to begin where they left off, going deeper and deeper inside with our own never-ending confirmation.

The message from these giants is the simplest instruction possible. It is the one that is so obvious we fail to notice it in all our striving and searching, until we internally develop the humility and the willingness to surrender all that we thought was real for the sake of *consciously living* the true reality—without any concepts about it. The message is uncompromising, and it contains the most sublime, perfect answer to every question:

Be still.

*Sit with yourself.
Be exactly as you are.*

Before any traditions, lineages or practices arose in human evolution, before there were any books or scriptures or teachings, people simply sat quietly and confirmed the Great Matter for themselves. This has been the true, time-tested Way. This is the *original* way of the direct application of Self-Knowledge. It is the most effective, ever-available resource by which to face squarely Selfward and keep going in the same direction. And absolutely nothing is needed for this but you—the already established, immediately endless infinity.

You can search your whole lifetime, and at the moment of your death when the life force in your body succumbs to the bliss and silence of eternal life, what is surrendered to in that moment is the same bliss and silence—the same substratum of peace—that can be recognized as your own Self when you simply keep quiet *here and now*. When you give yourself time to do nothing else but look directly at the immensity of your hereness without superimposing a single concept on top of it.

The unimaginable freedom of our “quiet inside” is bottomless, and accessible to each of us, forever. Being still reveals to you how wondrously infinite your real nature is. In the heart of this blissful stillness, infinity can only lead to more infinity. Look *here*, wait, and see...

* * *

In Self-Inquiry, we get to stop overlooking the one thing which is so omnipresent and yet so subtle that it infuses all the galaxies everywhere, not leaving out a single atom. It gets overlooked because of our concepts—the activity of our thinking minds. Remember that the source of all concepts is the one primary, universal concept “I.” Practice is about discovering the actual nature of the *feeling of being* manifesting as your life force, so that any sense of separation arising from beliefs about what you are in the form of “this” or “that” can be let go of. Even this feeling of being has an immediate source. It is permanently free of any adherence to being or not being. Abiding as this alone, your true and real Self shines forth unimpeded by temporal, illusory concepts.

What is it that has never changed throughout all the ways you have experienced your I-ness in this lifetime? Before the word “I” is said, before any image of yourself appears, what is here?

These are some of the questions that take you directly Home through the practice of Self-Inquiry. But how you “ask” them is not an approach based in thinking. The willingness to say nothing in sitting practice while remaining curious and attentive is the most skillful form of questioning, and it provides all the answers. If thoughts come, they come, if thoughts go, they go. Stay-

ing with the source of all these, your concept-free Self, you can become familiar with this boundless, infinite field within which thoughts arise and dissolve in you. You can be here without *reaching* for anything. You can allow the full length and breadth of your quietude to extend into eternity.

Spending time sitting with yourself takes practice. We are not used to doing *just* this in our busy lives. Our waking state from morning to night is filled with all the different kinds of effort we invest in the demands of families, jobs and other commitments. This is all the doing of infinity like everything else. No problem. But for your own process of familiarization with and confirmation of the eternal truth, you will wish to find some time in the day for direct looking at Self alone. The only effort you make in this endeavour is towards cultivating more and more effortlessness in the precious quiet time you give yourself.

Quiet sitting is very easy and natural. You only need to have a simple, comfortable place where you can sit down, with eyes open or closed (I recommend experimenting with both!) and just *be*. Nothing needs to be added. No manipulation, interference or fixing of any kind should be involved. Do not imagine yourself situated in a defined place or hold on to any reference point. You are not working to get somewhere, not *becoming* something. You cannot produce infinity; it is already here by itself, as you and everything. All the

universes are unfolding in their own perfect, spontaneous, unrestricted way. Your very being is pre-established as this perfection. So what do you have to say about it?

Just be at peace. Be peace.

The busy mind has a very difficult time looking directly at its own source. Quiet sitting serves to “cut through” the busy mind; your innate freedom is increasingly self-evident as the fruit of practice. If you feel you need to be doing something when you sit—praying, or visualizing, or controlling your breath, or holding your body in a particular way—it is because you are not yet trusting that your own true “size” is already infinite in each moment. The more you sit without doing or saying anything, the more your faith in the self-revealing function of your immediate infinity will grow and grow. Simply wait here, listen openly and humbly, and receive the never-endingness of your true nature. Surrender the mind to your unspoken, self-effulgent presence and see if there is any end to it. Keep attending to this.

Your practice should be uncontrived, natural, still. Anticipating and expecting nothing is the Way. By emptying yourself of all concepts when you sit quietly, the emptiness of “nothing added” is seen to be the blessed fullness of “nothing missing.” In this, all seeking comes to a halt. All needs, all wants are fulfilled by infinity’s own ever-flowing bounty. Your being here as

precisely this is love itself.

Inquiring into the nature of eternal life in quiet sitting practice, without concepts, infinity *expresses* its silent, pure, all-pervasive, wondrous supremacy.

* * *

When the Selfward-Facing Way becomes your life's passion, you do not distinguish between practice during quiet sitting and practice during other activities of your waking life. Always, always, you can remain curious about the infinite field within which all things arise and dissolve. You are inherently capable of having a total, direct, intimate meeting with every appearance, every form. Thought arises: "Within *what* is this thought arising?" Feelings arise: "Within *what* do I feel this?" Sights, sounds and objects are perceived: "Within *what* is my perception occurring?"

Without you, absolutely nothing can be thought, felt or perceived. So these questions all boil down to the one eternal question, which, if asked in utter patience and complete surrender—in steadfast determination to never preconceive *how* the answer will come—is the explosive, sublime resolution to every search:

"WHO... AM... I?"

What does the word "I" actually refer to, in you? What is the real, authentic, unchanging, moment to moment

nature of your existence? How immense can you recognize yourself to be when you cease projecting concepts into the unlimited spaciousness of your being? What luminosity, what animating power is transcendently here as the substratum of all, with or without “you”?

In this and every instant, countless trillions of galaxies are spinning in their effortless, cosmic perfection. This is a non-negotiable fact. How could you *not be* this unified, indivisible whole?

Everything is being “done” by the universe alone. The universe alone can sit. Find out what sits and *remain as you are*.

* * *

The ultimate understanding, and the direct application of this through practice, is life-altering. On the outside, so to speak, things might not change much. Since change is the perpetually transforming energy of infinity, you allow it to take its spontaneous course in “your life” without resisting or tampering. The routines of living may become simplified; certain activities, relationships or concerns that previously consumed your attention and interest can often fall away. But that’s all secondary to the bigger shift, which is in your perspective. Your *looking* now radiates moment by moment from that which is unchanging. This vision gives life to, permeates and embraces each instant, though you cannot fathom

exactly how it could be so. Reality is mind-blowing and earth-shattering. Simultaneously, it is the undeniable, imperishable truth.

In all the great diversity of manifestation, there is no place in which you do not see yourself shining. This recognition never negates the natural and often difficult challenges of living day to day in the form of a person, nor the times when emotions such as anger or grief are justifiably called for, nor the multiple horrors unfolding on the Planet due to human ignorance and greed. All of it can be met, wholly and with openness, from the simple, silent immediacy of infinity experiencing itself in form. Meeting every moment this directly, an appropriate response to circumstances and events is always forthcoming.

In you, the most awe-inspiring scientific discoveries and the most profound spiritual realizations merge in your ordinary, everyday life. Each ordinary thing in existence is a great miracle. The insects and the birds and the animals are miracles. The grasses and the flowers and the trees. The rivers and oceans, the mountains and valleys. The sun, the moon, the rain, the snow—all are miraculous. People are miracles. The elaborately orchestrated functions of your body-mind organism, in youth and old age, in sickness and health, are a blessed miracle. The all-powerful potential of each moment expressing unequivocally as *the way things are* is a vibrant, precious, self-affirming wonder to behold. This is "normal life."

Everything is sacred.

Moment to moment, infinity's direct experience of itself is the only reality. When you sit with this deep conviction and let go of every last concept, all at once, your recognition of universality is the stillness that *does not move* amidst all forms of activity. In your complete letting go, the universe rejoices in itself.

Infinity *is*. The unparalleled simplicity of this understanding is true Self-Knowledge, and it contains the revelation of everlasting happiness.

* * *

Finally, the only understanding of value is that which you establish, cultivate and maintain through practice, through your direct application of the ultimate truth, through your love of being quiet with yourself, through not harbouring concepts inside about what you are, what others are, or what the world is.

When you practice, let go of every understanding you have ever come across. Don't understand anything at all. Your immense infinite Self has no need for your understanding. Allow your *biggest* understanding to explode any remnant of "you" in inconceivable silence.

Genuinely investigate the true nature of your being. Find time to sit each day, if you can. A little goes a long way. When you sit, do *just that* and nothing else. Don't

think of yourself as a “meditator.” The concept of meditation is already far too loaded with techniques and traditions and paths.

In truth, there are no paths. There is only the never-ending immediate infinity, moment to moment. Simply be this. Be as you are.

Pay attention to your original, eternal essence. Intimately know yourself.

You have always been here. You can never not be. Trust and have faith.

Be authentic, natural, ordinary.

Walk lightly. Love All.

* * *

Face Selfward,

face Selfward,

FACE SELFWARD!

About the Author

Sally Ross lives in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. She began practicing meditation at the age of 19, though she did not really understand what it means to “abide” with a strong, quiet mind until she met her teacher Claudio twelve years later, in 2003. It took more years before she internally recognized peace as the pre-existent true nature of all beings, everywhere. She believes that the arrival of this recognition within the life of each person is infinity’s own destiny; exactly *when* or *how* can never be predicted.

One of Sally’s greatest “teachers” has been an autoimmune illness that was at times debilitating during much of her adult life leading to the publication of this book: “The most profound rest of all is waiting inside your resistance to what you think you cannot bear.”

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