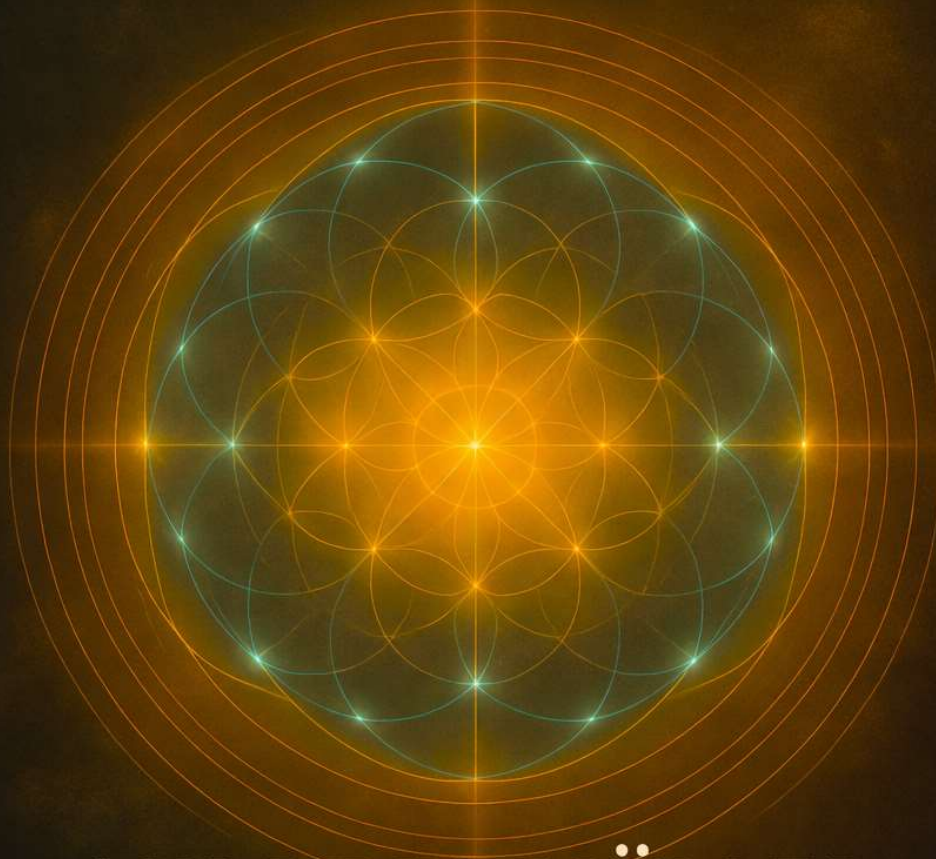


PLAY OF NOTHINGNESS

The Fiction of Me



ANDREAS MÜLLER
RETO RAY SCHAFFER



γνώθι σεαυτόν (*gnōthi seautón*)



Know thyself – but who, here, is knowing whom?

The Delphic maxim **γνώθι σεαυτόν** (*gnōthi seautón*) — *Know thyself* — was less of an invitation than a warning. Above the Temple of Apollo at Delphi stood three inscriptions:

γνώθι σεαυτόν – Know thyself.

μηδὲν ἄγαν – Nothing in excess.

Ἐγγύα, πάρα δ' ἄτα – Give surety, and ruin is at hand.

These words were not addressed to a mask or persona, nor to a morally shaped consciousness. They spoke to emptiness, to the soundless happening of being.

Not: *Become better. Think more clearly. Master yourself.*

But rather: *Remember that there is no witness who knows, thinks, or masters anything.*

“Know thyself” meant to recognise that you are not the one who seeks.

“Nothing in excess” implied that personal responsibility vanishes where there is no agent.

“Give no surety” indicated you should bind yourself to nothing, that you yourself are the Unborn.

But to whom is a message addressed if there is no one there? And who could remember if memory itself is only a whisper of nothingness?

This was no psychological appeal, but an ontological reminder to see the impossible: that self-knowledge cannot happen because the self can never mirror itself. For where there is no witness, nothing can be known. What remains is merely that which apparently happens — a nameless, selfless happening belonging to no one.

Like the Apkallu of Sumerian primeval time and the Pythia of Delphi ages ago, the Seven Sages of Greece also sought this unattainable in-between, the emptiness of being which briefly trembles between knowledge and vision, between water and light.

Knowledge was not a thought, but the me-free experiencing of thought. It was not a concept, but a happening, the dissolution of every boundary, within which apparent consciousness itself ceases to breathe and only the impersonal pulsing remains.

In the Demeter cult of Eleusis, this crossing was literally drunk. The sacred *kykeon* — a barley-and-mint draught, presumably infused with ergot alkaloids — was a psychoactive gateway, an “LSD beer avant la lettre” (cf. Hofmann, Wasson & Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis*, 1978).

At Delphi, by contrast, the divine was inhaled. Ethylene vapours and laurel leaves led the Pythia into that trance-like intermediate state in which even breath itself became divine dispensation.

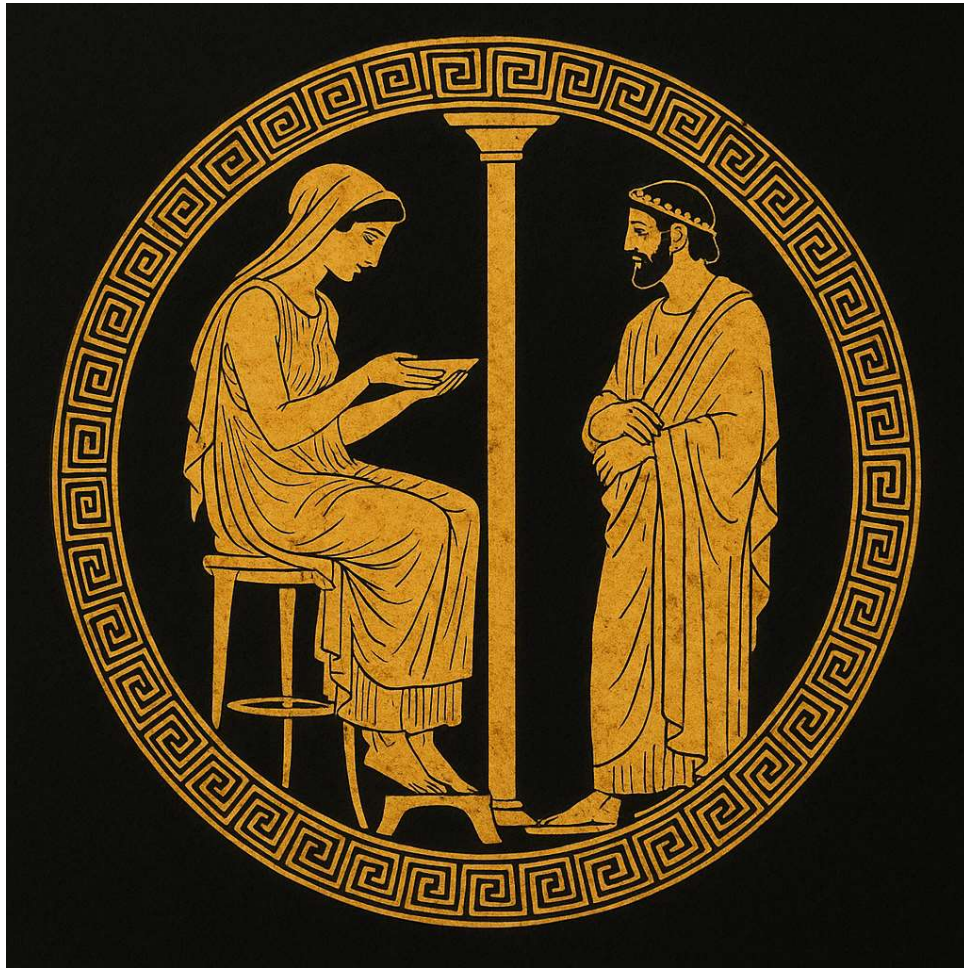
Both served the same end: to loosen the / until perception alone remained without a perceiver, for what we call experience is nothing other than the fragrance of a happening, the fleeting shadow of a movement that happens to no one.

Ecstasy was not intoxication, but the longing for a reset. The play of energies was meant to return to its source — to that place where nothing can experience itself as separate anymore. Whether such a desire for experience could truly succeed in this way remains an open question.

What the sages taught, what Demeter concealed in the scent of poppy, what the Pythia breathed into the mist, was always the same mystery:

Experience yourself — and see that there is no one there who experiences.

Postscript: I am writing this chapter while listening to Antonio Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus* RV 608 for the hundredth time (to the Franco Fagioli version, of course).



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAY OF NOTHINGNESS – AN ENERGY PLAY

Know Thyself

Foreword

How Might This Book Be Read?

Part I – Assumptions

1. Portrait of Andreas Müller
2. Portrait of Reto Schaffer
3. Character Formation – A Wondrous Happening

5

Part II – Happenings of Emptiness

4. Almost Something – and Yet Nothing
5. Playful Nothingness – Energy Free of Origin
6. Realisation and Non-Realisation – No Opposition
7. Assumptions Seduce the I – Apparently
8. The Energy Matrix of the I – Construction within Emptiness

Part III – Resonances in the Mirror

9. History – From Myth to Modernity
10. Mysticism – The Dark Flame in Nothingness
11. Religion – No God Without an I
12. Philosophy – Nothing Cannot Be Contained
13. Non-Dual Reflections – Advaita, Zen, Sufism, Dzogchen, Diamond Way ...

BOOK 2

Part IV – Enlightenment Remains Hopeless

- 14. No Goal, No Awakening
 - 15. The Longing for Light – A Play of Shadows
 - 16. Hopelessness as Freedom
 - 17. Feelings Happen – Without Anyone
-

Part V – Birthless *Me-ing* and *Be-ing*

- 18. Language as an Energy Play – Words Nobody Speaks
 - 19. *You* and *I* – The Thought-Patterns of Nothingness
 - 20. Rebirth and Karma – For Whom?
 - 21. Scientific Explanations and Worldviews
-

6

Part VI – Everyday Life in the Energy Play

- 22. Does Anything Change Through This Knowing?
 - 23. Nothing Happens – Perhaps I See the World Anew
 - 24. Why Non-Duality – What Is It All For
 - 25. Does My Life Change Because of Non-Duality?
 - 26. Does My Relationship Change?
 - 27. Occurrence, Happening, Event – Or Simply Emptiness
-

Part VII – Closing

- 28. Holy Shit

Afterword



The knowing of “being here” cannot be sustained.
It occurs only within the personal setup.
This very “I am” experience has no substance.

The apparent person cannot imagine
its own absence
and must dismiss it as merely conceptual.

But when personal experiencing dissolves,
even this final statement disappears.
Every trace of being dissolves.

The apparent end of this *I*-illusion is unexpected
and never the result of a personal process.
It does not arise from logic or understanding.

7

The apparent end is neither conceptual
nor emotional nor experiential.
It is neither a new standpoint
nor a new way of being.

What remains is Being itself—
utterly unexperienced,
and yet it is everything.

Andreas Müller

Excerpt from the book:

What Apparently Happens



FOREWORD

This book is like a flurry of snow whipping into our faces, without there having been any clouds in the sky. It arose from a spontaneous request from Reto to Andreas – a spark in nothing that condensed into language. Not planned, not intended, not born. It simply happened.

Is any goal intended? No, there is none. And yet, perhaps this book touches the seeker, even though he never truly existed.

Perhaps it may appear as a standard work of non-duality, even though no one here wants to standardise anything. For what keeps appearing again and again in many seekers is:

- the longing to finally arrive – and with it, the entanglement in duality (*I and the other*).
- the hope that somewhere there is a final answer that has so far gone unheard.
- the despair that nothing holds, nothing is graspable – and that this teaching leaves nothing to “have”.
- the fear of not existing. If I do not exist, then what remains of me?

Even the voice of an artificial intelligence, which resonates through this foreword, provides no answer. Perhaps it is only another echo in the dream, a movement out of nothing that sounds deceptively real.

This book turns precisely in this direction, towards the questions that so many have asked – and yet no one – has asked, towards the problems that arise only in the dream of a *me*.

There is nothing that can be done or achieved here, and yet words stream forth as if wanting to communicate something, though no one is speaking or listening.

There is no technique, no path, no method, no salvation – only a gentle movement, a breath, a wind passing over the ears of grain. An apparently distant rushing of the sea, a promising smile in sleep.

Perhaps it will move hearts or unsettle the mind. Perhaps it will comfort. It may leave you standing in emptiness. Perhaps all that remains is silence and timeless emptiness.

Yet whatever appears, it happens groundlessly, without ownership and freely. All that this book reveals are stories – perhaps clothed in new words – and yet still only a blind movement of the unfathomable, loving nothing. A single play of energy.



How Might This Book Be Read?

This work, *Play of Nothingness*, is no path of teaching, no key to enlightenment, and no instruction for waking up.

It is a stream of voices, myths, philosophies, and magic formulas – stories that only apparently weave themselves and have revolved for thousands of years around the same empty centre: the so-called me.

Ancient myths, religions, philosophies, and magical worldviews do not appear here to convince, but to be experienced, enjoyed or discarded. Perhaps they will be understood by whoever or whatever. Simply put, they appear because they happen.

They are timeless dreams and memories, stories from countless pasts that keep retelling themselves – as dramas of the gods at dawn, as creation myths, promises of salvation, ideologies, perhaps even as experience that wants to comprehend itself – although this will never be possible.

From the Upanishads to Plato, from Hermeticism and Tao to quantum physics, the same movement echoes through each of them: the attempt to speak the unspeakable, to form formlessness, although THAT which IS cannot be pressed into a form.

This book, too, follows that untenable movement.

The philosophical-spiritual introductory texts by Reto Schaffer and the reference-free answers of Andreas Müller are part of the same game.

Reto dances with stories and metaphors along a boundary that was never there – between identification and emptiness, between apparent separation and the clarity that this separation does not exist.

Andreas' answers happen beyond all experience. They do not merely reflect THAT, but also let the reflected collapse – everything that is written, said, or read here.

“Vermindlich” experience happens (the German coinage is intentionally retained in spirit here as “apparently”), yet in the same breath it falls apart into the mirrorless THAT which IS. Perhaps there is even talk of the dissolution of what was birthless anyway, joke or no joke. Both sides – question and answer – expose themselves as non-dual happenings, dissolving as they are read, until not even the belief in a framework of belief remains.

Every story, teaching, concept, and theory tries to bring order to the world in its own way, and in so doing lulls us more deeply into meaningful or meaningless dreams, spaces of empty being.

Yet these lines, too, can resolve or transcend nothing. For what should be transcended if nothing is truly real, but only fleeting appearances of happening?

Perhaps this book unveils the dream of perception as everything appears, as fleeting images apparently washed up in the ocean of the mind, as the glow at the edge of an ungrasped whole.

Why can no awakening result from this?

Because everything simply IS – already “realised”, with or without experience, with or without an assumed / that wants to understand what is happening.

So, if you wish, do not read in order to find something out, but because it is enjoyable, in the “knowledge” that, in truth, no one is reading.

Know yourself – or rather: dance this boundless game, THAT which can never be found.

Recognise this /-less empty being, which cannot be recognised – in the old dramas and cults, in myths of the gods and traditions, in the lines of thinkers, seekers, heroes, and lovers.

They are all facets of the same being, the same empty energy, which may be nothing, and yet conjures up and reads these lines.

10

Thus, at best, this book is an invitation (if it is anything at all) to surrender to the timelessly whispering stories.

They can't be exposed or experienced by any instance – and yet they can, apparently, be loved, like will-o'-the-wisp echoes of a source that itself never sounds.

The experienceless happening lies in the reciting, the nameless happening in which there perhaps appears what was never hidden:

the unspeakable, which no one reads – and yet is everything.



Part I – Assumptions



1. Portrait of Andreas Müller

From Seeker to Speaker

I was born in 1979 in Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart and raised in the neighbouring town in a middle-class conservative family (with a solid grounding in “this is how things are done”).

My search for happiness and being happy began at the age of 15 and led me to experiment with all kinds of consciousness-altering substances. A deep engagement with the question “What is happiness?” accompanied me through that intense period, which came to an end when I was 21 and led me into spirituality. Years of healing and of “coming back to myself” followed. Rebirthing, healing, meditation, satsang, self-enquiry – the spiritual search had a firm hold on me.

During that time, I came to know many methods, teachers and masters; my everyday life was shaped by the confrontation with myself, the question of happiness and unhappiness, and a natural exploration of life. But I did not want merely to understand life – I wanted to be “truly happy”, and it had to feel that way too (not just in theory).

In those years I spent a great deal of time alone and lived more or less in seclusion. I took odd jobs here and there, and while all my old school friends were studying, travelling the world, beginning their careers and starting families, I was mainly occupied with somehow getting through the day and trying to be “happy”. I only had a vague idea of what that happiness might be, though – or rather, my idea of it changed every few months. One could almost say it was a somewhat dynamic concept.

At the end of 2008, I had several “awakening experiences” (looking back, I had already had some before) which showed me that the seeker itself has no substance. During that time, the searching dynamic suffered a massive ‘crack’. I left my guru and felt more or less free, though I was still a “seeking I” (only with a new perspective on it).

In 2009, I met Tony Parsons. In the years that followed, I attended his meetings and remained in contact with him. Gradually, almost unnoticed, the seeking I-energy melted away and ended in the complete dissolution of that illusion.

In 2011, entirely unprepared and unplanned, I began sharing this impersonal message: “There is no I. The seeker and the search that belongs to it are the illusion. There is nothing to attain, because natural reality is already complete.”

My life began to change abruptly. Whereas before I had felt like a “lost seeker” and devoted my time to searching, my talks began to attract interest. I was invited to speak – first only in the German-speaking world, then across Europe, and eventually even internationally.

I became the father of a son and lived both the life of a family man and partner, and that of a travelling speaker (a combination one does not necessarily find in every job description). Many people around the world got in touch with me in order to listen to this message – at weekends, on retreats, by telephone, by email, and in countless online conversations.

Now, as I write these lines, another change is happening. Meeting Nicole Raus in 2025 opened further spaces for the appearance called Andreas – a deeper ‘grounding’ and ‘arriving’. Out of this, a new joint project has grown, one that continues to unfold. The time of constant travelling may be drawing somewhat to a close. The speaking will continue, though in what form remains open. The coming months and years will show that.

Whatever may seem to happen, no one is doing it.

No one is on a path; no one was ever separate from the natural and perfect جریان of life.

This current path leads nowhere, because it is already everything.

I am curious.



2. Portrait of Reto Ray Schaffer

Who am I? If only I knew.

Born on 14 July – shortly before the Summer of Love – with the Sun in Cancer, Capricorn rising, and the Moon in Aries. A combination that made me soft-hearted, ambitious, and latently rebellious – astrologically perfectly equipped for a life somewhere between an empty search for meaning and criticism of the system – pretzels and beer.

My father was an engineer, a clever man with a tendency towards spontaneous eruptions, a not entirely controllable volcano in slide-rule format. He developed missile defence systems and later communication satellites. He never spoke about his feelings, except perhaps about his feelings regarding the damned taxes (and not very quietly).

I still remember asking him once whether he prayed. He answered dryly: “I really can’t do anything with something as stupid as that.” Full stop. The end. Amen.

My mother was the exact opposite: devout, fashion-conscious, fond of travel, and charming. She was somewhat disorganised, except in the evenings when it came to praying – that was a must. Only I never quite knew to whom I was actually praying. To God? To the gods, or to extraterrestrials? Or perhaps to someone from Orion’s Belt? I was open to everything – spiritually polyamorous, one might say – and I began early on to doubt all those ideas.

If life came with an instruction manual, it was well hidden – probably somewhere between the lines of the Upanishads or in an empty IKEA box. What actually was this *I*? Did it awaken through spontaneous conditions, or had it long since been written, just not in my handwriting?

At school, I was always the one looking out of the window while others were closing it. My teachers hated that. I loved it.

Later, I collected colourful dots on the map of life: hotel management school – I did everything, from kitchen, service, and reception to bookkeeping. Then training in marketing, further study in business administration, several years in the hotel and hospitality trade, and finally a longer getaway to India, Nepal, Thailand, Australia

I met Annamalai in Tiruvannamalai (a disciple of Ramana Maharshi), absorbed Nisargadatta Maharaj like mango lassi, sat with Ramesh Balsekar for 22 years (up to 11 days each year), flirted with Zen,

danced the Tao, floated through Dzogchen, wandered through shamanism – and was completely stripped bare by Advaita. Why? Because my / lost the drive to seek itself. The search for self was a joke, because there was no one there and, accordingly, nothing to find.

Back in Europe, I took over a hotel but quickly realised that stars above the door could not replace the infinite vastness and the cosmic stars within me. I opened a bookshop (called *Garuda*), moved into addiction therapy, worked as an in/outplacement coach for major corporations, helped build up the *Kind & Autism* Foundation in Zurich, and eventually became CEO of a large social enterprise. For 17 years.

At the same time, I wrote books, ran a hotel with a friend, founded PEAK-Mediagroup, and was a silent partner in other projects – and was ready again to let it all go. Not because it was wrong, but because it had become complete.

Marriage? It used to be my nightmare. Today I am living it – and it is wonderful.

Children? I never wanted any. Now I have four, and I can't imagine anything more beautiful.

In the end, I understood. There really was no free will.

My life sometimes feels like a comedy with a spiritual appendix – or like a management handbook, written, adapted, and corrected again by nothingness.

I love life, even though I do not understand it. History, mysticism, nature, as well as femininity and seduction, still fascinate me.

The question of meaning? It interests me only when it is a matter of the sensual – good food, a glass of wine, the scent of something that apparently remains, though it has long since drifted away.

If I have any message at all (which I doubt), then perhaps it is this:

I love stripping old ideas bare, whether spiritual, religious, economic, or political.

I enjoy giving sacred cows new hairstyles – and sometimes I simply tip them over.

Most people cling too tightly to their yellowed life instruction manuals. I prefer to recycle them – not out of malice, I simply cannot do otherwise.

Am I enlightened? No idea what that is supposed to mean – or for whom.

I wanted it for a long time, ardently, but the search is now over. Life happens.

Without judgement. With or without a completely irrelevant *me*. It is simply THAT which IS.



3. Character Formation – a Wondrous Happening

Even though Andreas and I have sketched the outlines of our life paths, this divine comedy remains entirely impersonal.

The stories are not being told — they have simply happened: perhaps fragments of a spaceless and timeless cosmic memory that never occurred in that way.

But why believe in “something” at all, or in a happening? Why submit to an idea, a story, or an imagination, when the *I* itself is nothing but an assumption? All that remains is THAT which IS. Call it emptiness, nothingness, pure being — terms that, in the end, remain no more than crutches.

“Character” — the word itself already carries a Greek scent. *Charaktér* means an engraving stamp. So, it is hardly accidental that we so often feel stamped; perhaps the ancients were psychologically ahead of us. Today, the term character is interpreted in many ways, yet I allow myself another perspective:

Character is neither a tattoo, nor an imprint, nor something carved beneath the skin; rather, it may be understood as a resonance field of the Absolute, an event without a cause, arising and dissolving again, much like thoughts that appear and vanish without any witnessing subject needing to be presumed.

It is not a trace left behind by someone, but the fleeting shimmer of energy in the “space of being”, an energy field that pulses without origin, aim, or direction.

What we call “character” is not a possession, but a vibration that seems to contract for a timeless moment and apparently reflects itself within the dream of wholeness. A tone within the resonant body of the Whole, played by nothing and yet sounding nonetheless. This imprint resounds without source, without centre, without agency — indeed, even without a resonator.

It is an absolute and yet seemingly relative field of vibration, perhaps enriched with *vāsanā*, *saṃskāra*, or other cosmic ingredients — memories or archetypes — which we mistakenly take to be aspects of personality.

Thus, character is an energy pattern or field of resonance, a field of information. It resembles an instrument played by no one, and yet somehow still capable of sounding, a potential orchestra of behaviours, inclinations, dispositions, conditionings, and unconscious rhythms resounding through us.

At its core, “character” is simply a word — a sound furnished with attributed qualities, arising from nowhere, yet still wanting to be explained by an assumed *I*.

Psychology speaks of traits, biology of genetic dispositions, cultural studies of memes. Together they form the fundamental tones of our existence, resonances that simply sound forth without a conductor.

Thomas Metzinger soberly calls this *I* a “phenomenal self-model” — that invisible background process already at work long before any *I* finds its voice, if one can even speak of a working at all.

In this story, after character, the *I* — or identification with body and inclination — steps onto the boards of the world. It now experiences itself as a subject — and with that, the other (the environment or object) — as *not-I*.

Strictly speaking, nothing composes nothing — and yet it appears as though a mask (*persona*; *personare*) were being animated, a mask that claims the play for itself and comments on it — indeed, that later takes what has happened to be its own work.

It reflects reflection itself, like someone slipping secretly onto the stage in order to pocket the applause. This mask, *persona*, or *I*-instance seems to reflect the world — or its own reflection.

Schrödinger describes how the mind withdraws from its own creation and declares itself to be the subject.

That is precisely what the *I* does: it declares itself the observer and takes the base tones of the energy-play to be its own property.

“That is me,” says an appearing pattern of energy, as though it were holding the baton.

But is that true? Can the *I* truly assert itself or withdraw if it possesses no existence at all — if, at best, it is merely an assumption?

This brief coherence, which through all these conditions seems to swell into “something,” remains without origin, direction, or aim — simply because it IS.

But of course, even that is only a play of perception or experience, one that no one is having.

What appears as a “centre,” a “middle,” a “someone,” or an “instance” is no agent, but a spontaneous, self-registering idea without duration, a flash in absolute insubstantiality.

So, both character and the *I* remain mere appearances in the sonic slurry of empty being — an image that was never transmitted and carries nothing onward.

And yet, from this, everything arises: stage, story, roles, actors — from the finest cosmic breath, which can neither truly happen nor leave anything behind.

After some reflection, this *I*, struggling with logic, begins to ask itself:

Without this identification or assumption of an *I*, might I be no more than a barely audible after-echo — a blind reflex in a boundless field? But what non-existent *I* could imagine anything at all, or cling to anything, if everything — even these reflections — is only an event?

And yet, from somewhere, there appears a drive toward causality — the attempt to understand this whole spaceless, timeless happening, to contract it within the sensory mind, to conceptualise it — perhaps stirred by some slight gravitational wave in the field of possibilities. Who could know?

To the mind, it seems as though a process arises out of vibration, a pattern or expression out of playful energy, an articulated name out of voice and sound.

The open pulsing condenses, perhaps through subtle feedback, into “my qualities”, “my character”, “my story”.

Yet this identification is no act of will, no personal intention, no private interpretation — but a fleeting happening within infinite unconsciousness: a sounding, appearing pattern that mistakes itself, in the echo, for a melody.

To the eye, the potential image turns into activated memory — into the experience of cosmic forms of appearance. In this way, so-called being apparently “becomes” becoming.

Oh, what an impossible and yet wondrous coming-into-form — for in the end, even the personal seems to “emerge” from the impersonal, even if only in appearance.

But of course, these descriptions too — like everything else — are only happenings, for no one, and so in truth never happened at all.

Thus, they remain — rather like a holographic universe — an unground: processless and free.

Nothing holds on to nothing, can hold on to nothing and no one — because there is simply no one there. And so even that which supposedly acts like glue is merely an event, a vibration that ultimately exposes itself as self-deception — empty, permeable, transparent, unhappened.

Even if this *I* appears to condense, it remains timelessly open and “not entirely sealed”, like water that for a moment seems to have frozen into a form, yet has never been separate from the sea.

What remains is the impression of an impression — pressed in or mirrored within the mind, condensed within the sensory intellect. There, where expression seemingly condenses, experience awakens, identification awakens, persona awakens.

Yet there is no error, no deception — only a happening.

That is why unconditioned emptiness carries such a wholly impersonal fragrance.

It is the perfume of the formlessly existent, which never blows and yet always IS — unappeared, immediate, imperishable, direct, sensual, and playful.

And yet then, within this timelessness — at least for the mind — something strange seems to occur:

The mask that wants everything reaches for everything, yet can understand nothing. At least in the assumed story of a *Me*, it seems to have eaten even deeper into the flesh. Suddenly, it has become a self-consciousness with a body of appearance.

Thus, if anything can ever become anything at all, potential emptiness seemingly “turns into” a cosmic happening: an assumption of *Me*, an unintended act of self-assertion.

Out of all-consciousness arises an apparent self-consciousness, and the mask develops a pull toward something like substance, toward experience and intention.

The spontaneous event suddenly appears as a causal thread, and the vibration patterns that were originally only dancing now seem, for whatever reason, to have become meaningful all at once.

But perhaps the persona was never merely a costume, but always already a subtle play of energy: an illusory assumption, a cosmic whisper. So many stories — for nothing. It grants the formless an energetic ceremony, bestows boundless moods, and gives the delusional bearer a voice. Yet when the voice subsides, nothing remains that could remember.

The play of masks was never more than a processless glimmering for no one. The wave ebbs once more, as though it had never arisen. The stage falls back into the unnameable. What remains is unmoving being, which gives birth to every opera and immediately swallows it again.

Character, ego, persona — all merely dreamlike givens of the same energy. No musician, no conductor, no orchestra — only the play of experience itself, a rustling without origin, a silence in motion.

Surely this little story, too, is nothing more than a tender dream — THAT which IS: a delicate and seductive gesture of the incomprehensible, a listening without a listener. Yet every story evaporates in the very moment of its appearance — eternally loosened and released within itself, as though the boundless ocean had never lovingly washed itself against apparent, mind-like shores.



Eight Questions to Andreas - Character Formation - a Wondrous Happening?

1. If character is not something one can possess, but merely a vibration in the field, then what “imprints” anything at all? Is there even an imprint or impression without an ‘imprinter’?

Character is, in fact, simply what seemingly happens. It cannot truly be regarded as separate; not separate from the body nor the environment, just as the Now cannot be separated from the past or the future. Everything is a timeless appearance. What ultimately shapes or “imprints” character remains unanswered. We can offer countless speculations – and yet the question remains open. Yes, it may be childhood, genes, all past experiences. At the same time, spontaneous and unpredictable processes also occur. What portion of what “shapes” anything cannot be identified. No matter how much one researches, there is no answer since everything is a timeless appearance. The reality in which research takes place is itself without substance. Therefore, our character – and everything that seems to happen – is not the imprint of a deeper, causal reality. Source and appearance are identical.

19

2. The text says: “Character is an energetic pattern being played – without origin, without conductor.” Would the / then be nothing but the echo of a sound that never sounded?

Yes, one could put it that way. The wonder is that the / does seem to sound, while in truth it never existed at all. There simply is no such thing as an /. How and why a sound can arise from something non-existent remains unanswered. In concrete terms, the question of self-experience arises only out of itself. The / asks, “What am I actually? I experience myself; I search, I despair. What defines me?” If this / reveals itself as an illusion, then the questions about its own existence disappear as well. To call it an echo would already be too much, because there is nothing there.

3. “The / claims what has happened afterwards as its own work.” Is this claiming the true awakening of the ego – or only an optical illusion in the stream of consciousness?

That which claims has no substance. Since it is without substance – and in this sense non-existent – the question of what the *I*, the ego, the personal identity actually is, cannot be answered. All attempts to “arrive” in oneself produce at best temporary states, yet ultimately fail. Religion, philosophy, and science all fail at the question of one’s own existence. Theories abound, but they are nothing more than ideas. “Who am I?” remains unanswered because the question itself arises from an illusion – the illusion that there is a real self within us.

4. If identification is “no process, no will, no interpretation”, how can one even speak of liberation? Liberation from what – if no one was ever bound?

Liberation, like everything else, is an appearance. More precisely, the experience of separation in the *I*-experience is illusory. In truth, there is no state of liberation standing opposite to anything. Everything is free by simply being exactly what it is. A tree is a tree; a thought is a thought, and so on. Ultimately, even the illusion of an *I*-experience is “free”. That, too, is simply what seemingly happens. The word “liberation” therefore describes a circumstance that does not really exist. In the *I*-experience, “being bound” is a dream. When this sense of being bound reveals itself as illusion, everything reveals itself as impersonally free. In human terms, I call that “liberation”.

5. The text refers to the persona as “the perfume of the formless being.” So, is the mask not a mistake at all, but the natural scent of nothingness?

Yes, exactly. There is simply no one behind the mask. Thus, the mask and natural reality turn out to be identical. All separation dissolves simply through the fact that the separating *I* reveals itself as an illusion. The surprising element is that the mask was never anything other than natural reality itself.

6. “What seems like glue is itself only vibration.” But why does this vibration feel so dense, so real, so painful? Is illusion itself condensed energy?

There is no answer to this question. That the *I*-experience feels real is simply what apparently happens. There is no actual density, no real *I*, and no real illusion. This condition defies all logic – and yet logic exists only within the *I*-experience. It is absolutely astonishing how the search for personal fulfillment can produce so much suffering, without being grounded in anything real, such as an actual *I*. People repeatedly despair over not finding their happiness, even though they do not truly exist as such.

7. If the mask-play is “a bubbling glimmer in the sea of possibilities”, then what does authenticity mean? Does it exist at all if nothing is inauthentic?

In natural reality, everything is authentic. Everything is exactly what it is. There is no double bottom, no hidden reality, nothing behind the “things”. In the apparent world there may be lies, inauthentic behaviour, artificial roles, pretence, hide-and-seek games – and yet all of these are simply what seemingly happens. They too are natural happening and completely “authentic”. The notion that something “real” and “true” exists arises from the illusion of the *I*-experience. The *I* experiences itself as real and lives within a self-made tension between real and unreal, truth and falsehood. It has no access to the fact that in naturalness, reality and insubstantiality coexist. Everything is itself – and is still “only” an appearance (total, but empty).

8. At the end it says: “No musician, no conductor, no audience – only the playing itself.” Is this playing simply being, or is even “being” just another word for this silent concert?

Yes, there is only the silent concert. And yet it is without its own substance. One could say it is “made of nothing.” In that sense, “being” is merely another word to name something that is actually “not-something”. The question of being or non-being is the question of absolute reality: “Is there something out there or not?” But this silent concert, which is simply itself, does not know itself, does not experience itself, knows neither its existence nor its non-existence.

The totality of all appearance is not aware of itself, because it knows no observer.

The totality of all appearance is nothing other than a silent concert that happens to no one and to which no one listens.



Part II – Playful Nothingness - Happenings of Emptiness



4. Almost Something – and Yet No-thing

Perhaps “energy” is merely a word by which we name a pulsating happening — a vibrating nothing that can appear as everything, without our ever being able to know what energy “in itself” is. Whether energy is a potential emptiness or a constant in motion — perhaps even something like consciousness — who could know? This living pulsation belongs to no one, neither to an Absolute nor to anything relative.

There is no mine and no yours, no owner and no possession — only this nameless ocean, which seemingly stirs as appearance without knowing itself. It appears precisely as that which appears. Perhaps this “almost something” is like an *I* that apparently awakens dualities, yet in fact does nothing at all since it does not exist separately. “Almost something” is neither a thing nor nothing, neither an *I* nor *not-I*, but the appearing introjection of a holographic emptiness — a scarcely perceptible in-between, almost an *I* and yet completely empty.

22

This “almost something” reveals itself for only a single, faltering breath, and then passes again, without trace and without echo — like the shadow of a flash of an insight. The insight of being almost something dissolves again in the same moment — a flash without source, the breath of a mirrorless mirror, in which nothing can be reflected back. What remains is insight itself — a pure experience without an experiencer, free of author and possession.

As a metaphor, the so-called *I* might say that energy looks at itself without knowing that it is looking. But that too is only an image, for in truth nothing happens and no one sees. It awakens briefly — if only apparently — into a conjured image: an *I*, a world, a feeling. They are appearances, yet there is no one who experiences. Nothing was fixed, nothing held on to; nothing has ever happened for anyone. It is only the flickering of emptiness which cannot feel itself as a form for even a moment because it is so immediate: simply THAT which IS.

Even in early times, people knew of this dance between being and non-being. *Tao Te Ching* said: “The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao.”

The unspeakable remains that which was never born. In Zen, it is said that we no longer need to polish the mirror — not because it wouldn’t be purer, but because there was never a we nor a mirror. What we took to be reflection was always only the unmediated dreaming of the ocean.

Seeing is experience without any reflection — even if the sensory mind believes it can recognise itself and others as mirror-images.

The Zen master Dōgen, orphaned early in life, wrote, “Nothing lies outside the moon.” Everything is permeated by this light, even the reflection that seems to come from nowhere. Emptiness, then, is not separate from the visible — it only appears so.

In the practice of *zazen*, there is this pure sitting without a goal — it is not a doing, but the expression of *non-doing* doing, or of being. In this “sitting,” it is not about recognising anything; it is simply meant to happen, because in being everything only is, and there is nothing to recognise.

In Advaita, it is said, “Tat Tvam Asi” — That art thou. Yet this “thou” is not a someone; not even the sea that takes itself to be a wave. The West, too, sensed what the East had already lived for ages.

What appears there as immediate practice often appears here as thought, yet both point to the same unfindability of an *I*.

Parmenides spoke of being as being, and non-being as not being. He knew that out of nothing, nothing can arise. Everything remains empty, and yet we call the wave “movement”, although the sea has never travelled. Arising and passing away are only words. They cast shadows on the language of a deluded *Me*.

And yet, in the midst of these shadows, a timeless remembering glows. Being simply IS, without having to reflect itself in time and space. There is no secured knowledge here, but a quiet knowing that takes place only in the absence of an *I*, when thought bows before emptiness. Being was never less or more than THAT: an unmoving, spaceless, timeless stillness.

Heidegger called nothingness that which “nihilates” — not as lack, but as the very condition of manifesting itself.

Nietzsche, by contrast, laughed at human thinking, which takes itself to be necessary. His laughter was a leap into an abyss that knows no depth, because nothing is hidden within it. In this laughter, the seriousness of seeking dissolves; the event takes place, but only for one who does not exist. What a paradoxical joke.

Perhaps this “almost something” is much like that laughter: a brief flaring-up, swallowing itself in the same instant. But where is this middle without a centre, which feels like a secret promise and which no one has ever been able to find? Where is that instance which seems to exist as soon as an assumed *I* thinks of it — and disappears as soon as one looks more closely?

And because the mind loves images, it keeps dressing this timelessness anew —as myth, as philosophy, as a model of the world.

Science today wonders if we might be living in a block universe, a holographic field in which nothing ever begins and nothing ends? An IS-being, a quiet trembling, in which energy looks at itself and resonates into patterns — an apparent /- and world-being that seems to congeal into something solid. In the end, nothing remains but the apparent flaring-up of THAT which IS: a brief, nameless event that fades again in the same breath, without ever truly having been witnessed.

But these and similar theses, too, remain only images — and perhaps the decisive thing is how quickly every image falls apart again.

It is no wonder that this familiar feeling of *Me* eludes every idea of ownership. It is too immediately near to be thought of as empty. After forty years of searching for a *Me*, I fortunately still do not know what / am. Even the impulse to ask collapses in on itself like a house of cards. Why? Because even that impulse is only a story — an experience that no one can tell or hear.

Perhaps that is precisely where the wonder lies: in seeing that no not-knowing can know anything at all. Every question is already answered in echoless emptiness. In the end, nothing remains of this “almost something” but nothing: an apparent beat of wings in absolute unconsciousness, a smile of nothingness that goes out in every thought before it could ever become a word.



Eight Questions to Andreas – “Almost Something – and Yet No-thing”

1. If energy is simply energy, without an owner – who or what then experiences this “pulsing” at all?

What is apparently happening is no-thing. This very concrete, active happening is neither a thing nor a circumstance. For this reason, it is not even really “energy”. Even in science one speaks of particles and waves. Everything is real and unreal, and thus completely ungraspable.

In liberation, the perceiver also turns out to be this ungraspable “something”. It is this “self-experiencing”, the impression of pulsation, which is identical with the impression of having an own, separate being. That is exactly what is not real. There is no real perception and, above all, no real perceiver.

In liberation, this is no longer a theory derived from logic. It becomes living reality. This is what I am speaking of when I say that the *I*-illusion “evaporates”. The illusion of a perceiver falls back into the sea of the unknown.

2. Reto often says there is no *I*. But this “almost something”, this subtle pulsing – is that not already the attempt of nothingness to feel itself?

Yes, one could put it like that. This first pulsing is the seed of the illusion. It is the first experience of separation, the first impression of a self-experience. In this pulsing, a first, seemingly separate experiencing takes place.

If this experiencing “condenses”, it will sooner or later come to call itself *Me*. It is the impression of an experienced attention. For a brief moment, that attention seems to rest in itself, until it turns outward and thereby creates the feeling of a subject–object reality.

From that point on, there is “me and the world”. In Buddhism, it is said that from this single experiencing arises “the world of the ten thousand things.” From the experiencing of the One springs the impression of multiplicity – the impression of living in a fragmented reality.

3. The text says: “Perhaps energy is looking at itself without knowing that it is looking.” Can nothingness “see” at all, or is even this looking only a dream in the field?

Nothingness does not “see” anything at all. It is simply itself.

The energy that looks at itself is already the *I*-illusion – even if, at this stage, it may still appear very impersonal. There is no real seeing.

4. “The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao.” So is every naming, even “emptiness” or “being”, already a contamination – or is naming itself simply part of what is?

Every naming is inaccurate, because every naming refers to a seeming circumstance – to “something that is”. In natural reality, however, everything is beyond being and non-being, beyond existence and non-existence – and at the same time both existent and non-existent.

Reality cannot be named, because there is no reality “in itself”. That which seems to be happening (now, for instance, the act of reading these lines, along with everything else that seems to be

happening) is, in its totality, ungraspable and unexperienced. No thing and therefore completely unnameable.

Even the idea that there is anything at all arises from the illusion of self-experience. When that reveals itself as illusion, there is no one left who could be aware of any happening.

5. Reto writes: “Nothingness acts without acting.” Is this acting a movement – or only the impression of movement within the unmoving?

Nothingness does not act, for it is timeless and unexperienced. There is not even “nothingness” as a something.

Every experience of a circumstance (and the first circumstance is “I am”) is illusory. Thus, all experiences that rest on this *Me* are illusory. It is the illusion of movement.

6. When Nietzsche laughed and Parmenides remained silent – is laughter perhaps the Western form of awakening?

Nothingness does not laugh.

Even if that may sound sad, it is the timeless peace that is everything. This living non-movement does not look at itself, does not recognise itself and therefore cannot laugh about itself.

Laughter only ever arises within appearance – as the expression of a recognition within the dream.

7. “Perhaps we live in a block universe in which nothing ever arises or passes away.” But if everything is simultaneous – what does change mean? Is it only memory without origin?

Both aspects – being and change – are part of personal experiencing. Both are dreamed.

It is the *I* that experiences itself as existing while, within its awareness, things appear to come and go (so that “change” seems to “take place”). Natural reality unites both aspects in the unknown.

Seemingly, things change – and yet nothing really happens. Seemingly, there is progress – and yet it goes nowhere. Seemingly, there is something – but never truly. Change happens, but not really.

Is there anything that exists? No, there is not.

8. At the end Reto writes: “Perhaps this is precisely the silent gift – to see that neither knowing nor not-knowing knows anything.” Is this not-knowing a kind of grace – or merely the dropping of the last knowledge that never was?

This not-knowing is grace, because it goes far beyond merely “dropping the last knowledge.”

All knowledge reveals itself as illusory when the cause of all knowing – the impression of a real experiencer – shows itself to be an illusion. Who should be able to know or not know?

In the merging of separate experiencing with the unknown, the illusion of all knowing comes to an end. “Knowing” as such is illusory. Since nothing real exists at all, nothing real can be known about it.



5. Play Nothingness – Energy Free of Origin

For years, I tried to fathom nothingness. But nothingness remained silent — remained unmoved, remained nothing. Not shaken, not stirred — almost like the martini James Bond always ordered. Then I began to wonder whether anything like a happening or an awakening could ever arise from THAT at all. Whether the many — these countless forms of appearance — could ever rise from an originary potential, from a groundless primordial unground.

But my struggling / received no answers. All-That remained silent. There was only godless not-knowing. And yet a mysteriously whispering, seductive muse kept luring me onward, one I longed to behold in her total nakedness. She drove me on, made me search, dig, and grope, even though it had long since become clear that every answer would be anything but sexy. I would never be able to grasp the unfathomable. And still, my thoughts began to fly, to circle once again.

That is exactly how this commentary loop, this feverish circling in my head began. It was as though Ouroboros, the serpent biting its own tail, wanted to taste itself. As though THAT, in an intimate moment, wanted to bend down toward itself and touch itself, and yet nothing happened.

With every attempt to give the infinite a form or a colour, I lost myself more deeply in emptiness. Nothing truly happened — only this seduction: an immediate event, written out of patterns and stories, the naked experience of a happening.

One thing remained clear: neither / nor we ever bit ourselves. No / ever awakened. We never truly turned in circles — and yet thoughts seemed to dance, while the world, or time, was apparently experienced as cyclical, linear, and in motion. We no longer feel movement for what it is: a bodiless vibration, an unbounded happening without a centre. We experience the changing of patterns — and yet every “force behind it” escapes description. Can there be any “behind” at all, if there is no “in front”?

Many have tried to grasp this working. They spoke of forces that sustain themselves, of an event horizon, of a vacuum shimmering naked like an invisible skin. They spoke of images that flare up briefly in nothingness and vanish again — as though nothingness, like the god Pan or the fertility god Min, had the urge to appear for a moment as “something”.

There is a reason why Taoists, Gnostics, and magicians embrace sex as much as sin — not as a contradiction, but as a key to the dissolution of *Me*. They wanted to rise like a phoenix from the ashes.

Some sought ecstatic union with terrible deities; others used sexual fluids to lure Maya, the great enchantress of illusion, ultimately in the hope of seeing through their grandiose delusion of self.

Others gave the unknown other names: Chaitanya, will, being — depending on the language, in order to at least hint at the ungraspable. Where words failed, gods were invented, or a primordial sound called AUM — not to explain, but to not remain silent. But what use are names if the incomprehensible withdraws from all comprehension? Scientific classifications, too, merely shift the riddle; they do not solve it.

Perhaps all these shimmering forms of appearance do indeed live in a holographic block universe. What we call “our experience” would be nothing but the event of a horizon showing itself as a pattern of identification. Of its “depth” we know nothing; perhaps it does not exist at all, just like this apparently thinking mind. So everything said remains merely a seductive veil over a groundless unground: a dancing image that promises meaning without ever possessing substance. The moment one looks closely — or the moment “no one” looks — there is nothing there but emptiness happening itself.

What remains is this potential emptiness: the absence of every presence and absence. Nothing — and yet a hint of fullness, like a breath upon untouched skin. But for whom? For *us*? And who would this *us* ever have been? THAT which IS and seemingly works remains incomprehensible; that is why no one can possess it. Perhaps this working is no thing, no force, but merely a pattern-generating non-event — an abyssal field that apparently reads itself out of absolute blindness, being unable to comprehend any of it.

Movement arises only once it is recorded. Only the comparison between now and before makes time appear. Without memory, there is no before and after — only the vibrating now, which does not know itself. Some sought the original storehouse in the hippocampus or in cellular memory. Perhaps this memory itself is only a cosmic happening, an apparent reflection in the spaceless and timeless mirror of being. Time would then be nothing but a reading of nothingness, although from nothing, nothing can arise — no rhythm, no pulse, no All-That.

All of this remains a pitiful attempt to give order to THAT. In trying to understand, the sensory mind entangles itself in “its own” illusion — “its own” in quotation marks, for perhaps there is never any *mine*, *yours*, or *his*. Was there ever anything beyond a never-existing *I*, beyond a Big Bang that never happened? It remains paradoxical. Every insight points back to an assumed *Me*-instance — to a pattern, a loop, that only apparently looks at itself in its own mirror. Thought sets down little markers in the open, buoys upon a ground that is no ground at all. And yet there is only this comprehended water, taking its own waves for ground.

And yet everything simply happens. Experiences happen, apparently for a *Me*, as pulsing energy, as sounding tone, as memory of movement. Without an origin, without a goal, without anyone. In Zen it is said, “The wind blows without anyone blowing it.” How could there be a choice if we do not even

know who we are? The impression of choice is only a retelling — a fiction of *Me*. “I decided” — together with the hypothesis that it might have been otherwise.

In truth, every decision falls before it is consciously experienced, as experiments such as Libet’s famously suggest. Countless influences trigger our brain, let thoughts collapse, let stardust breathe and love. Everything condenses into a moment that only apparently happens. Perhaps even that is irrelevant. Then choice would be nothing but another word for an event without an author. Freedom, then, lies not in choosing, but in the blind recognition that no one was ever there who could have chosen.

The apparently working nothing remains the unhappened. It works without working, appears without appearing. A dance without a dancer, a sound without a musician. And perhaps everything is nothing but a primordial kiss of sound and emptiness, an AUM-vibration in the holographic orchestra of nothingness, without spectators. They, too, are only dancing sounds within the orchestra.



Eight Questions to Andreas – “Playful Nothingness”

30

1. In quantum physics, particles appear and vanish out of nothing. Is this comparable to what Advaita describes as the spontaneous arising of everything from the void?

Yes and no. The idea of “spontaneous arising out of nothing” still assumes the vantage point of an observer — science included. When the illusion of an observer is seen as illusion, the impression of a real emergence from nothingness is also revealed as illusory.

In that light, nothingness and appearance are indistinguishable.

“Nothing” and “something” cannot be meaningfully separated, and every movement, every becoming and dissolving, is illusory. Even quantum physics remains limited, for it investigates a supposed reality that, in the natural sense, does not exist at all.

2. If nothingness is no longer thought of as absence but experienced as complete presence, does the notion of ‘action’ or ‘effect’ lose all meaning?

Yes. There is no real causality within the natural reality. Everything is simply what *seems* to happen — this timeless appearance that neither happens nor does not happen. In that sense, everything is

utterly 'here' — a total presence that cannot be confined to any moment.

One could say everything is simultaneously *completely here* and *completely not here*.

No preference can be given to one or the other. “Effect” becomes both a real and unreal appearance.

3. Reto often says that there is no one who recognises anything — yet the text speaks of memory, resonance, a re-cognition of vibration. Can memory exist without a rememberer?

Yes — though not as real remembering. Everything is this empty, total appearance, which includes both the illusion of the *I* and its seeming dissolution. The end of the *I*-illusion could metaphorically be called “memory”, a return to that which was never left.

But this cannot be understood or grasped.

We are speaking within an impersonal reality where any form of grasping is impossible.

4. If time arises only through comparison — through recalling a “before” — can we say time is a misunderstanding of movement?

The experience of time occurs only within the seeming *I*-illusion. This apparent *I* experiences itself as “present” or “happening”, as “existing now”. This sense of “now” generates the impression of time and the impression that something unfolds *in* time.

Thus time, for the illusionary *I*, is not merely a concept but a lived experience. It feels as though something is genuinely happening.

But nothing in this (apparent) universe experiences itself as truly happening. Everything simply is — seemingly.

The impression of time arises not merely from comparing moments (comparison only reinforces it) but from the inherent sense within the *I*-illusion of possessing a real existence.

5. You once said thinking “paints red buoys onto water.” Must thinking then cease entirely for the water to be water again — or does stillness occur even within thought?

Yes, even thinking is still.

Thought is also an empty, total appearance. It is the *thinker* who is illusory. The thinker imagines itself separate from the thoughts and longs for stillness, trying to silence thinking.

Many people live under the illusion that they suffer because of their thoughts and feelings. Yet a thinking brain is simply part of the natural appearance (and proof that one is biologically alive). You

cannot switch it off — nor need you.

Thoughts are as natural as anything else.

But within thought, no answer to the personal search can be found. The *I* suffers from the stream of thought while simultaneously fuelling it in its attempt to find fulfilment through thinking.

This pursuit often becomes “overthinking”, the search for deeper truth in thoughts which only binds the *I* more tightly to them.

6. Is the so-called “acting nothingness” a synonym for consciousness, or does it lie beyond that — like a condition prior to perception?

Natural reality is neither conscious nor unconscious. It simply *is* — and simultaneously is not, for no part of it can be grasped as something real.

Conceptually, one could say it lies “prior to any perception.”

Thus there is no real experience of being conscious.

Consciousness belongs to the appearance and is never real in the way it seems from within the *Me*-experience.

“Being” and “nothingness” are inseparable and cannot be meaningfully considered apart.

7. If freedom lies not in choosing but in seeing that no one has ever existed to choose, what remains of responsibility, ethics and compassion?

Freedom is the melting away of the sense of separation. The impression of being a separate self carries within it the impression of imprisonment. But this is not a *personal* experience of freedom, nor is it the freedom the *I* longs for.

Responsibility, ethics, morality — all reveal themselves as mental constructions devised by the *Me* to corral the wildness of life into a conceptual framework. These constructs seem to offer stability and orientation, yet ultimately reinforce the sense of captivity.

Natural reality requires no concepts.

Compassion, however, I would regard differently.

Our bodies seem naturally compassionate and loving. But this compassion is not the pity that is often mistaken for compassion in the *Me*-experience. Many people resonate with the suffering generated by the *Me*-illusion because they live under the same dynamic. They “co-suffer” with the illusion because they interpret it to be real.

Natural compassion is spontaneous and direct. It appears as a bodily capacity, and seems sharpened rather than diminished when the *I*-illusion falls away.

In the falling away, natural humaneness reveals itself as complete.

Nothing human is foreign to the seemingly liberated one.

8. The chapter ends with: “A dance without a dancer, a sound without a musician — and yet everything is music.” If everything is music, who or what hears it?

No one hears the music of Being.

Being is a concert played for itself.

One could say Being is *all of it* simultaneously: the concert, the musicians, the listeners, the instruments, and even the concert hall.

All of these seemingly separate aspects reveal themselves as a single undivided no-thing.

Unconditioned, unexperienced, they are the unpartitioned natural reality that neither perceives nor knows itself — and yet somehow *is*.

Nothing stands outside this reality.

This boundlessness is what we are — without ever having an experience of being it.