

The Ever Present Origin of Here and Now
Talk to the Center for Spiritual Life Bitterroot Valley
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Such a delight to be with you, and to take up a little something about this month's theme, which is the right place at the right time.

I often bring two songs, but instead of a song here, I'm going to invite us to do a practice together, just to kind of attune a little bit to what I'm going to be talking about.

So if you're up for that let's just relax...and you can breathe your eyes closed, but remain very present behind your eyes. And just take stock of the environment of you right now...thought, feeling, sensation, emotion..and just feel into the context of the here and now. And notice that gap or space between the thoughts. And since you are that space, just step into it and occupy it. And let go of the reins.... be no place, no time, no body, no one. And just recognize this field of awareness as that in which everything is known and in which everything arises. And just notice. silence, stillness, heartfulness, and "I am-ness" are already present. Rest knowingly as that aware presence. And, when you're ready, you can open your eyes.

Very good. We're sinking into our being and keeping a touchstone there, and bringing our body and mind in congruence with our being. This is practicing open awareness. It's being present from no point of view, no judgments, no demands placed on life. This is what I'd like to talk about today, in the context of here and now we'll get to it a little bit.

Walt Whitman said, "Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes." Sound like a lofty ideal? Well, it may not be so difficult. That's what I'd like to explore here. You know, this is my 20th talk at CSL by my count. And over these years, I've kind of built up a teaching around the

nondual understanding. and that I'm just going to mention a few things I've talked about over the years.

Nondual understanding is congruent with our direct experience. It always invites us back to what we actually know to be true. And, if you notice, the world, your body, your mind all arises in you and is *made of* awareness. So our true body is awareness and we can recognize everyone and everything shares that being and that awareness. We're all in it together. Life looks like a mess to the mind but is already whole and complete...an incredible paradox. And it's all eternally okay if we "Just be here now". So why is this so difficult?

Well, one answer to that might be found in this statement from Khalil Gibran, who is the wonderful Lebanese American artist, poet, and writer, who wrote *The Prophet*, who said, **"Every man is two men, one awake in the darkness, the other asleep in the light"**. Isn't that an interesting statement? In the dark of being, we are awake in the dark, in the unknown. Being knows nothing of a world, a body, a separate self. It's just the totality of what is, and it knows only itself. But in the seeming light of perception, sensation, and thought - the mind - we're *asleep* because we're hypnotized by the content of our experience.

So last time, if you remember, I said that if you allow it to be true, that you can have a quiet mind, a refined breath, and a luminous awareness, life takes on the quality of a dream. That's because it *is* a dream, appearing before the soul. And I quoted various nondual teachers on that. There's a lot of agreement on that in a deep mysticism, a deep spirituality.

So with all this as a kind of review, what does all this have to do with our theme this month, "the right time and place"? Well, place and time are part of our consensual, materialist reality. We all think we know what we mean by place and time. We never question that. But you know what? Our assumptions about place and time aren't actually congruent with our direct experience? Let's explore this a little bit.

So let's take time. We think of time as being a series of nows strung on a necklace, kind of like beads. What is now made of? Does now appear within time...the concept of time? Or does time *appear* to arise within the now? In reality, in our experience, now is of indeterminate length. It is ever-present. It's "now" until the mind comes along and says, it's "then", right? Or it "will be then". So, all of these are thoughts in present time.

I'll bet everybody in this room has read Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* at some point along the way. But, how many of us have done the investigation pointed to there and carried it all the way to the end? This becomes particularly critical with psychological time, which is believing that there's a better now than this one. And we go seeking for that. The belief that there's a better now is resistance. It's the place in us that says, "I don't like it. I don't like this." And looking for the better experience...that's seeking/ Seeking and resistance take us away from now. So can we see this process happening within us and come to a rest with it?

Time is created by thinking, and if there's no thinking, what is there to time? One thing about psychological time and that effort to escape, we don't know what's going to happen. And this is what gets forgotten and that negative thinking, "negative automatic thinking" they call it cognitive behavior therapy - "NAT". Those "nats" foster negative emotions within the body, and where our attention goes, energy flows. So you got to watch out for those "nats" and swish them away.

So it's always now. It's always now. It's only ever been now. There never was a past that we can go visit. or a future. What does that have to say about *your* past and your future?

Now, let's look at "place" for a minute here. Close your eyes again, just for a second. Doesn't the sense of place that was here just vanish? Doesn't your experience just become a loose group of sensations floating in your awareness? That "no place, no time, no, no one". That's the Dharmakaya, the truth-body of the Buddha. There may be sensations, feelings,

perceptions. But is there somebody in there with you having these experiences? Can you find that one?

You can open your eyes. You can't find that one. There's just open awareness in which these experiences arise. So *you* are always "here". If you drop identification with the assumptions about the content of your perception. The field of you as open awareness is always *right here*, which is the "right place".

Where do "here" and "now" actually come from? Well, the origin of space and time is alive in you and arising in you at every moment. Rumi says, "**As you start to walk out on the way, the way appears**". So, in other words, life arises as that every present source or origin. Our response to life, in each and every detail, creates what comes next, and then we follow that. There's no conceptualizing needed to live free with happiness, peace, and love.

So what would it mean to live this way as if it's always now and you're always here? Some of you know I just got back from Scotland on Friday. My wife, my niece and I went there, and I'd like to illustrate some of what I'm talking about through my experience on that trip. We decided to do this trip on Labor Day, so not long ago, and there was a lot of activity getting ready and getting there. But it all happened "now".

I walked through it as "now", and we boarded a plane, we flew for hours. We walked through castles and museums and rode on trains and ate in pubs and then came back to Montana. But I never left "here". All that apparent experience *passed through me*, through open awareness, through the field of me, just like a dream.

So what was it like to experience it that way? Well, here are a number of things.

More ease, less resistance. Sitting back and letting what unfolded in a way that's whole and complete already.

Differentiation without distinction. I could appreciate the richness of the

environment and the people and the culture and allow it to come in very close. It was wholeness. I never really saw separate people, places and things. It was a dream of unity, *made of awareness*.

More rich experience, less analysis. I let the experience come to me without expectation. Every time my mind would try to figure out something or analyze, I'd just notice that and let it go.

Less fatigue. 18,000 steps a day or more over rough ground, steep terrain. But no resistance to watching my body go through that.

Less need for sleep, perhaps because there was less residue from the flow of the day. And finally,

More flow, If we're not rubbing up against resistance to hear and now, life flows. As Alan Watts said, "Life is not a problem to be solved. It's a mystery to be experienced."

So when you first catch this and start living from it, it can be disorienting. It takes some time to adjust, and come out of long set patterns. But more and more, my experience verified the truth to me of what I'm describing as life experienced from open awareness, without the concepts of time and space.

So to start to sum some of this up, **“Every man is two men, one awake in the darkness, the other asleep in the light.”** To be focused on time, objects, and space as discrete realities is to be “asleep in the light”. In the east, this enmeshment in the chaos and difficulty of life is called samsara. But the man or woman who's “awake in the dark” is the awareness that knows all experiences. And resting knowingly as this open awareness, is “being aware of being aware”, which I've talked about here before.

So “BE HERE NOW”. Ram Dass's instruction from 50 years ago takes on the significance it deserves. We tend to think we're in the “right place at the right time” when synchronicities occur. Synchronicities are the simultaneous occurrence of events that appear significantly related, but have no discernible causal connection. We like them when things go our way and we get what we want. But open awareness reveals the true origin of synchronicities: that the “right place and time” is an inner event, being in

alignment with our true nature with a profound sense of inner harmony, “Out beyond ideas of right and wrong”. Rumi says, “Wherever you stand, be the soul of that place.” Isn’t that beautiful? He means (possibly) “Don't fall into separation. Be so close to your experience, whether pleasant or not, that you *are that*. Savor your experience and don't judge it. That's the challenge to the personal self of living as open awareness.

As you start to walk out on the way, the way appears. This is the ever-present origin that “following the way reveals the way”. Can we trust life that much?

What happens to our lives if we release the compulsion, the burden that we may feel around time and place? Can you feel the constant stress or pressure that may arise from making a deadline or striving to get somewhere physically? These assumptions about reality are not congruent with our direct experience. And relaxing these assumptions and letting life come to you releases a lot of energy. Feel the ease of resting back as the timeless now that's always here.

What this all comes to is living from the inside out. So the right place, the right time flows from living from the inside out transcending any judgment about the future or getting somewhere else. Hazrat Inayat Khan had a beautiful affirmation he said, every morning and evening in this regard. It goes like this, **“My thoughtful self, reproach no one, hold a grudge against no one. Bear malice against no one. Be wise, tolerant, considerate, polite, and kind to all”**.

Can we live this way in the face of the seeming collapse and chaos all around us? Yes, and we must. We must move toward what we want in life without wasting energy on that which is untrue and dying. Being caught in the pairs of opposites is Samsara. If we're free of the madness consuming everybody, then we're available. We're a force for unity and healing in the ways that divine unity uniquely presents to each of us. Nondual understanding is congruent with our direct experience, doesn't require adopting beliefs or creeds and leads to happiness. Though it initially can

sound strange, I'm convinced that this direct path can be a potent spirituality for the 21st century, especially as we see our institutions and values from the last century disintegrating before our eyes.

Open awareness reveals the origin of here and now. Every moment is a choice the universe makes through us. So be awake in the dark in the cosmic dream, and you will understand what Rumi means when he says, **"O Seeker, listen to your heart's true yearning. Don't sleep. Give up one night of your life to the vigil. Don't sleep... You have spent a thousand nights in the cradle of sleep. For the sake of the friend, don't sleep.... The loving witness never sleeps by night. Follow his ways. Give yourself to him. Don't sleep.**

and then you can

"Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes".

Thank you.