

THE ETERNAL NOW

'All time is contained in the present Now-moment.'

Meister Eckhart

The Illusion of Passing Time

Psychologically, most people live in 'passing-time,' either dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. "There is only the present moment. But in separation there also seems to be the past and future, which are often attached to feelings such as fear, regret, anxiety, guilt, nostalgia, hope, and so on. These feelings all make the past and future seem very real."

When we are immersed in the world of passing-time, the horizontal dimension of time, we meet life at a point of conditioned reaction. Lost in the appearances of things and events, we cannot go beyond perceptual consciousness. In *Living Time*, Maurice Nicoll writes: "We are submerged in the stream of events. We are not properly conscious. Man, sunk in appearances and connected like a marionette with outer things, is effectively spiritually dead, through lack of realization of the mystery of existence."

Under the illusion of passing-time we can have no unity. There is no *now* in passing-time, for *now* is squeezed into the future, or into the past. There can be no unity, integration – nothing but successive states, the ever-turning kaleidoscope of *I*'s. We fall every moment, prone and lifeless into the overwhelming stream of time and events, and the circle of our reactions. For at every moment we can sink down into our habitual state of consciousness – where no integration is possible – where, indeed, we are, and can only be, divided up into innumerable little contradictory parts, which continually steal us from ourselves. Then we lie asleep in appearances, lost to ourselves, for then the sense of ourselves is derived only from the ever-changing responses to the flicker of appearances. Life carries us away, now up, then down. And the illusion of passing-time, and the thinking only in terms of time, cause us to fix our eyes always on tomorrow *which never comes* – for it is always tomorrow. So we live ahead of ourselves, strained out in time, and are never *here*, never in the place where we really are, the only place in which anything real can happen – in *now*. (1)

When we remember a past event, it is happening only in the present moment. Strictly speaking, we are never directly aware of any past event. In fact, we are only aware, in the present moment, of a memory-picture of the past, which may be defective or incomplete. In *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, Alan Watts expands on this notion:

But what about memories? Surely by remembering I can also know what is past? Very well, remember something. Remember the incident of seeing a friend walking down the street. What are you aware of? You are not actually watching the veri-

table event of your friend walking the street. You can't go up and shake hands with him and get an answer to a question you forgot to ask him at the past time you are remembering. In other words, you are not looking at the real past at all. You are looking at a present trace of the past. From memories you infer that there have been past events. But you are not directly aware of any past events. You know the past only in the present and as part of the present. (2)

Most people are unable to live in the moment because of their fear of unavoidable death and nonbeing. Transpersonal writer Ken Wilber explores this common human fear in *The Spectrum of Consciousness*: "Dualism propels man out of the timeless Now, where life and death are one, into the imaginary world of time where he battles to escape an illusory death by securing himself a fantasy future. That is, to live in the timeless moment is to have no future, and to have no future is to die – but man cannot accept death, and so he cannot live in the Now above time."

On the Existential Level man is in flight from death. That is, he refuses to live without a future in the timeless Now – he wants a *future moment* as a promise that death won't touch him now. He doesn't want *this* timeless present alone, he wants the promise of yet *another* present *ahead* of him. Thus he arranges for *this* present to pass on to yet another present, and he harbors the secret wish that all his moments will flee into future moments forever. For precisely this reason, none of his present moments seem timeless, eternal, and complete in themselves . . . The eternal moment, which *is* always, therefore appears as a series of fleeting moments, a series of durations lasting a few seconds. With the rise of the secondary dualism, the eternal Present appears as the passing present. In flight from death we demand a future, and thus our moments pass. (3)

In awakened states of consciousness, time seems to expand, slow down, or even disappear altogether. There is a shift in orientation with less emphasis on past and future: "Awakened individuals spend much less time recalling past experiences or ruminating over past events, just as they spend less time looking forward to the future daydreaming about future events or focusing on future goals. Indeed, they focus on their *present* experience."

Why does wakefulness bring this different time orientation? It is partly related to the awakened person's intensified perception. Because their surroundings and experience are more real and vivid, they naturally pay more attention to them in the present. It is also related to the inner quietness of the wakeful person, particularly their lack of (or reduced) associational thought-chatter. One of the main reasons we normally spend so little time in the present is simply because we spend so much time immersed in thought-chatter. Ultimately, the past and future are concepts created by the human mind. We never actually *experience* either because our minds and bodies are always in the present. The past and future only exist in thought, whereas the present does *not* exist in thought. A large proportion of thought-chatter is related to the past or the future in some way. So the quieter

our minds are and the less immersed we are in thought-chatter, the more present we are. Our normal linear perception of time is a mental construct generated by our strong sense of ego. The weaker our sense of ego becomes, the more linear time seems to fade away. Our perception of time slows and expands – and eventually disappears into now-ness. (4)

According to Western Advaita teacher Jean Klein, our real nature is timeless. When we live in the *now*, there is no sense of passing-time. Past and future are strictly based on memory and expectation. When we think of the past or contemplate the future, it is always a present thought. In *Open to the Unknown*, he writes:

When we are free from thinking, as happens often in daily life, there is no time. Time is the mind, but our real nature is beyond the mind. It is in the timeless that time appears; otherwise, how could we speak of time? We are the timeless; we live the timeless in the now. In other words, we are presence in the present. We can never think of the present, because we are the present. When we think of the present, it is already the past. So we can only think of the past. Time is created by the succession of thoughts, but when we live in the now we are constantly one with the object. In the now, we live our verticality; otherwise, we live on the horizontal plane, which is psychological time. Chronological time, such as the cycle of the seasons, is always in the now. By this I mean that chronological time only has reality when it meets the vertical. Functional time only exists by and through the vertical. (5)

Living in the now, rather than in passing-time, belongs to a higher order of consciousness. Maurice Nicoll: “*Now* enters us with a sense of something greater than passing-time. *Now* contains all time, all the life, and the eternity of the life.” The vertical dimension of time crosses the horizontal dimension of passing-time and allows spiritual energy to enter ordinary life: “If we could awaken, if we could ascend in the scale of reality concealed within us, we would understand the meaning of the ‘future’ world. *Our true future is our own growth in now, not in the tomorrow of passing-time.*”

Now is spiritual. It is a state of the spirit, when it is above the stream of time-associations. Spiritual values have nothing to do with time. They are not in time, and their growth is not a matter of time . . . The feeling of *now* is the feeling of certainty. In *now* passing-time halts. And in this halting of time one’s understanding has power over one. One knows, sees, feels in oneself, apart from all outer things; and above all, one *is*. This is the state of faith, as I believe was originally meant – the certain knowledge of something above passing-time. Faith is *now*. What the time-man understands about faith is something quite different. Faith has to do with that which is alone in oneself and unknown to anyone else . . . All insight, all revelation, all illumination, all love, all that is genuine, all that is real, lies in *now* – and in the attempt to create *now* we approach the inner precincts, the holiest part of life. For in time all things are seeking completion, but in *now* all things are complete. (6)

The Mystical Experience of Time

There are numerous accounts of individuals entering higher states of consciousness in which they experience the timeless present. "Past and future are purely subjective and have no objective existence in reality. Reality only knows the single frame of the moment of being."

During meditation, reverie, or prayer, time is often perceived as an eternal present in which the divisions of past, present, and future meld into an all-encompassing now. In this state, it is not just the separations in time that disappear, but also separation between people and things. This state is a doorway to the One Mind. This experience is amazingly common. It often erupts spontaneously, as when we are transfixed by a plangent musical note, the smell of fresh-baked bread, or a coyote's midnight howl. For millennia humans have experimented with ways of being in the present and uniting time's divisions. Practitioners of various spiritual traditions have always known this territory; so, too, have poets and artists. Many outstanding scientists have also entered this timeless dimension and have left accounts of their experience. (7)

The classic Zen master Dogen described a state of 'being-time' in which a human being is not so much out of time as one with it: "We are completely in the present moment, completely aware of our surroundings. The future is not yet here, the past is over. The present now includes all history since the beginning of the universe, and it includes all possible futures." Spiritual teacher and author Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee captures the experience of timeless awareness in his essay "Living the Moment of Love":

A simple and essential truth teaches that only being awake in the moment is real. Only then can the strawberry be tasted in its full sweetness, the plum blossom be seen in its fragile beauty, without memory or preconception. This is the Zen moment of *satori*, when we are fully present in the experience, in life, *as it is*. It is a moment "in and out of time," which we usually glimpse only for an instant before the thoughts and the patterns of our consciousness cloud over our eyes. In the now there is no change. There is no before or after. Each moment is complete in itself. This is part of the intensity of the experience that belongs to the consciousness of the Self – eternal, immutable, the still center of our turning world. (8)

In deep meditative states time seems to disappear altogether. Meditators have reported experiencing states of consciousness which transcend ordinary time: "Time, as we know it, vanishes and there is no 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow.'" Not only does a change in the sense of *I* belong to a higher quality of consciousness, but the natural concept of time derived from our sensory contact with the world disappears and a new knowledge or sense of time takes its place."

The essential self is eternal; it never changes. It is pure consciousness, and pure consciousness is timeless. Our normal experience of the passing of time is derived from change – the cycle of day and night, the beating of the heart, the passing of thoughts. In deep meditation, when all awareness of things has ceased, and the mind is completely still, there is no experience of change, and nothing by which to mark the passing time. I may know I have been sitting in absolute stillness, but as to how long I have been there, I may have no idea. It could have been a minute, or it could have been an hour. Time as we know it disappears. There is simply now. (9)

Mystics and other 'sensitives' point to a state of consciousness which transcends normal linear time. They perceive that time is an illusion and there is no past and future existing independently from the present moment, the eternal now: "The past and future are simply the illusory products of a symbolic boundary superimposed upon the eternal now, a symbolic boundary which appears to split eternity into yesterday vs. tomorrow, before vs. after, time gone vs. time to come."

The experience of timelessness or eternity is not limited to mystics or enlightened beings. It can occur in the lives of ordinary people and, especially, young children:

Most of us would have to admit that we have known moments, peak moments, which seemed indeed to lie so far beyond time that the past and the future melted away into obscurity. Lost in a sunset; transfixed by the play of moonlight on a crystal dark pond which possesses no bottom; floated out of self and time in the enraptured embrace of a loved one; caught and held spell-bound by the crack of thunder echoing through mists of rain. Who has not touched the timeless? What do all of these experiences have in common? It seems, and the mystics agree, that time appears suspended in all of these experiences because we are totally absorbed in the *present moment*. Clearly, in the present moment, if we would but examine it, there is no time. The present moment is a timeless moment, and a timeless moment is an eternal one – a moment which knows neither past nor future, before nor after, yesterday nor tomorrow. To enter deeply into this present moment is thus to plunge into eternity, to step through the looking glass and into the world of the Unborn and the Undying. (10)

Eternity and the Dimensions of Time

Our sense of time as flowing from past to future is a mental construct necessary for sensory perception and practical purposes – the surface level of reality. It represents the 'horizontal' or psychological dimension of time. But there is also a 'vertical' dimension of time accessible through the portal of the present moment. The preoccupation of psychological time with past and future actually prevents one from living in alignment with the vertical dimension, the "isness or suchness" of the present moment.

The totality of our life exists in multi-dimensional time, encompassing past, present and future as one whole or unity. Maurice Nicoll: "Our life surrounds us, it does not lie mainly in tomorrow; it does not pass away. We labour in an immense field of living Time of which we inhabit a small portion. It is only our senses that turn all this into passing-time."

Ken Wilber points out that in our direct and immediate awareness there is no experience of time – no past or future, only an "endlessly changing present that never comes to an end." The memory of the past and the anticipation or expectation of the future are themselves a direct experience in the present moment. In our direct experience there is no past or future, only an endless present.

From the perspective of awakened consciousness, both time and space are illusions. There is only the eternal present: "Everything exists in its own here and now. Hereness and nowness are aspects of the same thing. They are presence. In Oneness, the illusion of time collapses into the infinite present and the illusion of space collapses into ever-present hereness."

From the perceptual point of view, the present is just an infinitely brief moment, unperceivable, without duration, the one-dimensional now. From the aperceptual point of view, the present is infinite, always here. It is not a point on the two-dimensional procession of time. It is omni-dimensional, infinitely expanded, the whole of time. It is the temporality of Oneness . . . What then is the reality of time? It is the eternal present. No matter what time it is, it is always the present. The present is all there is. In illusory time, the present is a point, a durationless transition between future and past. But in real time the present is infinite, always here, always present, an infinitely long time. The present is durationless in perceived time, but has infinite duration in real time. If you ignore the transition from perceived time to real time, you will stumble into the paradox that when you are in the present, the asymptote of brevity, you are also in eternity, the asymptote of duration. Thus, eternity intersects (perceived) time at the point where reality intersects illusion, the present. Eternity intersects time at the present. (11)

When we carefully examine our direct experience of life, we see that everything we perceive occurs in the *now*, in the present moment. Eternity is not everlasting time but the timeless present. Eternity is present in each moment of time, transcending the space-time continuum of ordinary reality. Father Thomas Keating: "Everything is happening in every moment, if we could only wake up to it."

This moment, because it contains or embraces all time, is itself above time or timeless, and that is the nature of Eternity. Whether we say all time is now, or whether we say there is no time but now, it all comes to the same thing: time is a vast illusion, and *this* timeless moment is Eternity itself. Thus, Eternity is not ever-lasting time but the real unfading, indestructible, and timeless Present. (12)

The experience of a timeless and eternal reality contains all time, past and future, in the present moment. Ken Wilber: "Eternity is not a philosophical opinion, nor a religious dogma, nor an unattainable ideal. Eternity is so simple, so obvious, so present, and so straightforward that we have only to open our eyes in a radically empirical fashion and *look*. In the words of Zen master Huang Po: 'It is right in front of you!'"

We commonly imagine eternity to be a very, very long time, an unending stretch of years, a million times a million forever. But the mystic does not understand eternity in that fashion at all. For eternity is not an awareness of *everlasting time*, but an awareness which is itself *totally without time*. The eternal moment is a timeless moment, a moment which knows neither past nor future, before nor after, yesterday nor tomorrow, birth nor death. To live in unity consciousness is to live in and as the timeless moment, for nothing obscures the divine light more thoroughly than the taint of time. As Meister Eckhart puts it: "Time is what keeps the light from reaching us." (13)

A passage from *A Course in Miracles* poetically encapsulates the dimensional mysteries of time and eternity:

Now is the closest approximation of eternity
that this world offers.
It is in the reality of 'now',
without past or future,
that the beginning of the appreciation
of eternity lies.
For only 'now' is here.
The present is before time was,
and will be when time is no more.
In it are all things that are eternal,
and they are one.
What time but now can truth be recognized?
The present is the only time there is. (14)

The Present Moment

Albert Einstein recognized that there was something unique about *now*, the present moment, that was a human experience different from the past and future. He thought that there was something essential about the now which cannot be explained by science. Maurice Nicoll also sensed the uniqueness of the present moment: "All that we know by immediate experience is a hypothetical point of time which we call the present moment. In this present moment we see things ending and beginning, things passing out of existence and things coming into existence. And we know that this present moment is somehow moving and always turning into another present moment."

In the eternal now, past, present and future all merge into one. "At the moment we are caught between the past and the future in the immeasurable interim of the present. Nothing ever happens in the past and the future – everything occurs in the present moment." This present moment is inseparable from life itself. Eckhart Tolle speaks to this in *A New Earth*:

On the surface, the present moment is "what happens." Since what happens changes continuously, it seems that every day of your life consists of thousands of moments in which different things happen. Time is seen as the endless succession of moments, some "good," some "bad." Yet, if you look more closely through your own immediate experience, you find that there are not many moments at all. You discover that there is only ever *this moment*. Life is always now. Your entire life unfolds in this constant Now. Even past or future moments only exist when you remember or anticipate them, and you do so by thinking about them in the only moment that is: this one. Why does it appear then as if there were many moments? Because the present moment is confused with what happens, confused with content. The space of Now is confused with what happens in that space. The confusion of the present moment with content gives rise not only to the illusion of time, but also to the illusion of ego . . . Everything seems to be subject to time, yet it all happens in the Now. That is the paradox. You never experience time itself. You only ever experience the present moment. If you go by direct evidence only, then there is no time, and the Now is all there ever is. (15)

Eastern spiritual teachers recognize that only the present moment is real; past and future are merely thoughts occurring in the eternal present. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: "Since you were born, has *now* ever changed? Things and thoughts have been changing all the time. But the feeling that what is now is real has never changed."

There is something exceptional, unique, about the present event, which the previous, or the coming do not have. There is a livingness about it, an actuality. There is a 'stamp of reality' on the actual, which the past and the future do not have . . . What makes the present so different? Obviously, my presence. I am real for I am always *now*, in the present. The past is in memory, the future in imagination. There is nothing in the present event itself that makes it stand out as real. It may be some simple, periodic occurrence, like the striking of the clock. In spite of our knowing that the successive strokes are identical, the present stroke is quite different from the previous one and the next – as remembered, or expected. A thing focused in the now is with me, for I am ever present; it is my own reality that I impart to the present event . . . Things and thoughts have been changing all the time. But the feeling that what is now is real has never changed. (16)

In *The Art of Peace and Happiness*, Rupert Spira notes that a common misunderstanding is to equate the eternity of the present moment with everlasting time: "However, these two belong to completely different realms, one real and the other imaginary. 'Everlasting' is related to

time and denotes something that supposedly lasts forever. 'Eternal' is related to the timeless and denotes that which is ever-present now. It refers to the experience of the eternally present and unlimited nature of our essential being."

Our self is ever-present now, and we do not experience a succession of nows. This present now is the only now there is. The now in which the body was born is the very same now in which these words are appearing. It is the only now there ever truly is. For this reason, our own being is said to be eternal. This doesn't mean that we last forever in time, but that we are ever-present now. There is simply no time ever actually present in our experience in which our self could exist other than this present now. Our self did not appear at a particular time and will not disappear at a particular time. There is no time present in our actual experience in which something could appear and disappear. There is just this ever-present now, and this now is not a moment in time; it is timeless Awareness, our true nature. (17)

Self-Realization and Time

Self-realization and the attainment of a higher state of consciousness requires an escape from the circle of our associations and habitual reactions. These take the form of long-term habits, a passive surrender to situations and beliefs, and a belief in appearances and passing-time. The direction of growth is towards the unrealized, what we may be potentially and not what we have been in the past. This greater reality is not in phenomenal existence but rather in psychological existence and inner experience.

To begin to awaken into a higher state of consciousness and understand the meaning of our existence, we must see through the illusion of passing-time. Maurice Nicoll: "Starting from a passive state in which we only react to our senses, we can undergo a growth in consciousness and pass from a passive to an active state. Mere length of days will not bring us to it, for we can remain, *psychologically*, in the same part of our inner world for all our remaining years, if we continue to always think and act in the same way. Time will then pass, but psychologically we will remain *stationary*, ever turning round the same circle of inner space."

If I think that I only live in a world registered by my senses and confuse growth with the passage of time, I will never be able to understand the direction in which my possible growth lies. I will always see it as outside me, in external activities and in the direction of tomorrow. But are we not always in *two* places – one in known three-dimensional space, the other in inner space – one in the 'material' world, the other in the 'spiritual' world? I am *here* in this street, in this house, at this moment; and I am also *here* (in the psychological world) in this state, in this mood, in this reaction, in this feeling – and at *this point* in the spiral of lives, in the ocean of existence. Could I realize this fully then would I know fully that what I do *now* is the only important thing. For to realize these two *heres* together is already to realize something of *now* in which

time halts . . . Realizing *now*, I perceive something that does not change, something that is both spectator of myself and really myself, in relationship to which all my temporal troubles and problems become small. For then it means that nothing matters save this feeling of *now*. And this is because in the presence of greater meaning all lesser meanings, that fill our ordinary mind full to the brim, shrink to their true proportions and cease to steal from us. For in the presence of greater meaning we are redeemed from everything small and trivial. (18)

The visible or manifest aspect of the universe can be perceived by the senses and form the foundation of the collected knowledge and understanding of science at a given point in time. But there is a further range of experience of the world which enters from within as inner truth, a new order of knowledge: "A world of *inward* perception then begins to open out, distinct from that of outer perception. Inner space appears. We understand a new form of consciousness, of light."

The aim of the spiritual journey is to reach a state of consciousness in *now*, where one is present to oneself. The growth of the feeling of now implies a turning away from sense perception and the linear progression of past-present-future. Now contains the "eternal reality of our own being," and reflects a descent from a higher spiritual order to temporal and spatial existence. To overcome the domination of the sense-based world, it is necessary to consciously turn the faculties inward, to enter wholly into *oneself* in the present moment.

Awakened consciousness embraces all that is, both the outer world and the inner world. One no longer reacts to the events of the moment, but is fully conscious of living in the eternal present: "We are present everywhere in our life. We no longer feel ourselves confined to the body in space, but become conscious of the body in Time. We become conscious in another dimension of our life."

The mystery of time is in ourselves. We can struggle to awaken to a new sense of time and a new sense of ourselves and so get beyond what we think we are already and what we think we know already. But in every struggle of this nature we will inevitably realize more and more that it is *oneself* that is the mystery – that the whole thing is in oneself – *in what one takes as oneself*. The mystic ocean of existence is not to be crossed as something outside ourselves. It is in oneself. A man must surely realize that it is invisible in him. And when he really touches *now*, he will know that all his lives, lived and unlived, meet here, beyond all conditions of passing-time, and that he has in himself all that is necessary for the overcoming of his most difficult problems – in this *now*, which, if he fails to discover, will always be replaced by the stream of passing-time. Realizing what it would mean to hold *now*, he will catch a glimpse of the meaning of that strange phrase in the *Wisdom of Solomon*: 'He, perfected in a short time, fulfilled a long time.' (19)

In order to be fully awake in the present moment, it is necessary to develop a higher, finer quality of attention and presence. When we 'remember ourselves' we can control our

attention and expand the present moment. This opens the possibility of no longer living in reaction and passing-time: "The solution is in the creation of *I* and in the creation of *now*, which are one and the same – in the sense that *I* dwells in *now*, and not in passing-time. Then there emerges a new understanding of the meaning of life, *of what we are and what we can be.*"

As we gain self-knowledge, we can bring into consciousness the sides of ourselves of which we are unaware. Through direct experience we come to know the many *I*'s which comprise our personality and prevent us from attaining integration and unity. "Man is incomplete because he has no true sense of self-existence, no real sense of *I* which belongs to a higher world. Unless one sees the world from a different perspective, unless new ideas and perceptions touch our inner consciousness, we cannot rise to a higher level."

Self-transformation begins with discovering a 'way' or 'path' which guides the process of inner work and connects us with a higher order or level of reality. Maurice Nicoll: "It is necessary to find some kind of *way*, some form of work upon oneself, that will connect one legitimately with knowledge of this order, through a gradual transformation of oneself. There must be the feeling and conviction of something else, something higher."

As we gain self-knowledge and a new understanding of life, something begins to assist us. Our perception of the universe undergoes a significant transformation. "The universe is *universality*, and therefore is *All* and *One*. Only when we begin to change ourselves does the universe change. That is the secret."

In expanded states of consciousness, there is a direct perception of *all life*, a sensing of unity in diversity, as well as a profound sense of individual self-existence. The universe is seen as intelligent, purposeful, infinite and eternal, the womb of all possibilities. One perceives the true nature of our existence, crossing from passing-time to eternity as this present *now* includes the whole of time: "One drop of eternity is of greater weight than a vast ocean of finite things. One real moment, one real thought, one real feeling, one real sensation – is worth all the rest."

In an essay on self-reliance, Ralph Waldo Emerson eloquently captures the ever-present reality of the eternal Now:

These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God today. There is no time for them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that stand around him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time. (20)

Through inner work it is possible to transcend ordinary time-bound states of consciousness and open to higher levels of reality, apprehended by direct inner experience. "A new action of

the mind begins – a rethinking of everything in terms of *all of life* and *now*. Above space appears Time, and above the enduring World in Time lies the enduring World of all possibilities, which is the World of Eternity.”

What raises the level of consciousness and opens us to a different aspect of the world is the creation of *now*. The time-man knows only state, hurrying from one into another. *Now* is vertical to this, and belongs to the scale of degrees. In *now* we get above state. Inner space is changed, enlarged. To feel *Time* itself is to open a corridor within. The illusion of passing-time begins to leave us, and all the life begins to enter *now*. To live unto eternity is to live unto unity, unto wholeness, completion, unto *the integration of all life*. And this is *now*. The enemy to *now* is the illusion of passing-time . . . Passing-time brings us to each moment of our lives. Were our consciousness different, each moment would be registered. We would see *into* each moment and thus leave a *trace of ourselves*. This would be to dwell in *now*, wherein alone anything can be done. The potential of consciousness would be raised. But the time-man lowers this potential, so that our energy is never gathered into *now*, but distributed in a hundred directions of the imagination. So we are always ‘thinking,’ as we call it, not realizing that these thoughts lead us always in circles and never give us any real starting-point. (21)

In its deepest sense, awakening is becoming one with the timeless present, with the dynamic living moment. When we are open, attentive, and available to the present moment, there is no separation between subject and object, between perceiver and perceived. There is simply *now*, the timeless moment: “It is about fully inhabiting the sacred space of the moment. Breathing, listening to the sounds, feeling the air on your skin; all this is opening to the realm of being, the true self, and realizing the fundamental interdependence of all things.”

We have to make a radical change in perspective and start looking at life in a whole new way. Only when we stand time on its head will we be able to see that *every single moment is special!* Every single moment, whatever it’s made of, becomes an adventure. Life is suddenly interesting because each moment invites you to participate in what’s going on right now. You become totally absorbed in the moment, submerged in its radiant “suchness.” Bathed in the powerful glow of your attention, every mundane activity become special; picking up a pen and filling out a form become “enlightened” acts. Instead of carrying time around like a dead weight or dreading it as something to be gotten over with, you actually start enjoying yourself as you disappear into your chores . . . We feel more poised and confident as the old adversarial relationship with time disappears and we enter the “timeless” realm of the moment. We go about our daily routines with a peaceful mind. There are no extraneous activities, no additional duties to fulfill in order to get somewhere else. Even obstacles become opportunities for realizing ourselves in the moment. The deeper our attention, the more vivid the moment. (22)

References

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