



THE POWER TO CHOOSE

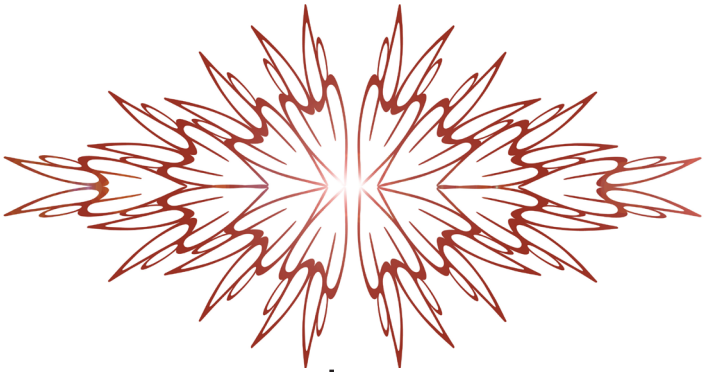
AN INVITATION TO FREEDOM



Godfri Dev



an invitation to freedom



by

Godfrey Devereux



this little book
of talks, queries and responses
is not a dissertation on the nature of reality
it is not an explanation of the way things really are
it is an invitation to you to find out
that you are absolutely perfect
just the way you are



this book is dedicated to

LEONARD COHEN

*poet, musician, songwriter, singer, novelist, sage
for taking the journey from wisdom to awakening
so quietly*

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PREFACE

This book is not a scientific treatise nor a spiritual text. It is a presentation of a specific perspective. This perspective, of unity, contains within it many others, which themselves do not contain it. It is the perspective in which the relationships between the perspectives of separateness, connectedness, interconnectedness and nonseparateness are contextualised within the emptiness that lies at their core. This comprehensive contextualisation is the all-inclusive perspective of unity.

While the perspective of unity can be accessed and understood rationally, reason is not its source. It can only be accessed through deep intimacy with what actually happens in the experience of being human. As the heart of the human experience is what we feel, the remarkable rationality of the human mind must address itself to the deeper, and more elusive realm of feelings, sensations and perceptions. It is only by becoming intimate with the nature of perception itself that we can understand the true significance of whatever we perceive.

While meditation is the classic tool for establishing direct intimacy with perception, there is another more simple, and even direct way. If we are able to become intimate with what we feel, we will in the process become intimate with the nature of perception. What we feel is the body, what we call it is the mind. What we experience is based on both. For the perspective of unity to be clearly recognisable some kind of somatic practice based on sensitivity to what you feel is probably indispensable. It would be hard to find one more potent than the Dynamic Yoga Training Method¹.

¹ www.dynamicyoga.com

INTRODUCTION

Misunderstandings about human nature go back millennia. Almost all psychological and spiritual texts contain confusion about the relationship between body, mind, spirit, self and life. While there are historical, and even contemporary exceptions, almost all so called spiritual paths, psychological perspectives and self help techniques reveal the same confusion. Deep and lasting happiness is supposed to depend on transformation resulting from knowledge, skill and effort. Effort, skill and knowledge are supposed to take us from the dissatisfaction of where and what we are to some other, better place and person.

Almost every recipe for happiness, fulfilment, actualisation, liberation, enlightenment or salvation involves changing who and what we are. At the heart of this process is the mechanism of control. We are urged to establish better control over our thoughts, behaviour, body, breath, emotions, reactions and self. This includes the deeply toxic notion of eliminating the mind: or at least thinking. A notion which is usually reinforced by the desire to kill the ego, and the deeply destructive denial of organic impulses and needs which that foolishness leads to.

The impulse to control is a natural response to feeling unsafe, a necessary response to perceived danger. Control as an impulse, motive and process is based on the anxiety that comes from feeling separate, isolated and alone. Within this the separate other becomes a threat. To minimise that threat the other must be brought under control: nature, nations, tribes, societies, families, individuals; even desires, impulses, feelings and thoughts.

This creates a deep culture of alienation, manipulation and conflict: us against them. One in which social and political power mechanisms, from centralised banking to institutionalised morality, become accepted and acceptable. They are taken for granted because the culture of control is so deeply embedded in everyone's attitude to herself, and expressed in his most treasured activities: those by which he or she will eventually become, and be recognised as, a better, more acceptable person.

The need to become a different, better person is based on the insecurity and fear caused by alienation from life. An alienation that leaves us feeling isolated, exposed, vulnerable. We are compelled to take control of as much as we can to protect that vulnerability. Yet when we see deeply, with our own intelligence, into the nature of life as it actually is this all changes. In the deep, direct encounter with life as it is we discover that we have nothing to fear but our fear.

Life has been misrepresented and slandered through the distorting prism of institutionalised fear. A prism within which nature and spirit, matter and consciousness, good and evil, life and death, the observed and the observer are set against each other on the lever of control. This rests on the experienced separation of a perceiving subject from “its” perceived objects. This normal, everyday experience of division and separation is in fact only that: an experience. It is not the way life actually is in itself.

Confusion about the nature of life has led to endless suffering. Denial of the validity of feelings, sensations, desires and emotions becomes resentment of the body and aversion to nature: fear of life itself. This amounts to a social schizophrenia reflected in and supported by a cultural worldview wherein conflict is the engine of society. This divisiveness is deeply embedded as it rests on the innate mechanism of perception itself and is supported and expressed by innumerable cultural and social institutions.

Self enquiry is an opportunity to go beyond the perceptual dualism underlying our collective nightmare of culturally endorsed anxiety and conflict. It is not about setting out to change who we are. Change is natural to life, it does not have to be imposed. Fulfilment rests only on our coming back to who, what and where we most fundamentally and meaningfully are. It is a return to the very heart of being human.

This does not require superhuman physical or mental powers. It does not depend on refining, purifying or shutting down the mind. We are not required to repress or deny our senses, our emotions, our feelings. We do not have to transcend our bodies, time or causation. We do not have to impose our conditioned and limited ideals on the rich abundance of life. This is all the stuff of fantasy.

All we have to do is look in such a way that we finally begin to see. We have to begin to see through cultural distortions that we take to be real, to the perceptual distortions that underpin them. This looking is what self enquiry actually is. Self enquiry, as a process, is enquiry into that which is actually happening. An enquiry that reveals and releases imposed interpretations into

the wisdom of life itself. It is not primarily an intellectual enquiry, although the mind will enjoy and reflect it with conceptual observations. It is based directly and primarily on intimacy. Intimacy with thoughts, feelings, sensations and actions.

Then we are brought to the only wisdom we can rely on; the intelligence of life itself. This is a wisdom that no mind, book, philosophy, library or university can ever equal. The human design contains the fruits of three thousand, five hundred million years of research and development. Nothing has been overlooked or forgotten. Every cell of the human body is encoded with the most sophisticated intelligence available; becoming intimate with this intelligence is self enquiry. It has nothing at all to do with technique. By becoming intimate with action and thought the experience of being human is totally transformed.

This transformation is as profound and priceless as it is subtle and satisfying. The need to control is replaced by a passionate willingness to enjoy. An enjoyment that rests fully and irrevocably on a deep trust in the intelligence of life. Then the intelligence of mind is recognised to be only a small and not so significant part of that deeper, more dependable intelligence. As the intelligence of mind is discovered to be subordinate (though not inferior) to the intelligence of life itself, the decision making processes through which human life unfolds is surrendered more and more to the wisdom of life.

This is not a way of living that the mind can talk itself into. It is a disposition that rests on profound experience of the innate relationship between body as action, mind as thought, and life as intelligence. We need make only one very simple enquiry: can life be trusted? This enquiry can not be given to any cultural authority; it must be given to life itself. It must become a deep examination of the nature of action and perception: the twin towers by which human life unfolds. Then the intrinsic relationship between self and other will soon become clear, and eventually the relationship that they have to life as a whole also.

Within this revelation the need to control, and its subsidiary need to know, dissolve into the unified flow of life. Neither the knower, nor the controller have any further authority, having been unmasked as nothing more than misinterpreted feedback loops generated by the sophistication of the cortex. External circumstances are met openly and spontaneously with no controlling centre claiming the title of self. What actually happens is responded to naturally without any further need to establish permanent ascendancy of pleasure over pain, certainty over uncertainty, spirit over matter, good over

evil, right over wrong. The natural flow of life as an endless rhythm of changing circumstance and experience then provides a satisfaction and delight that knowledge and control never can, while relieving them both permanently of their mistakenly assumed authority.

The talks, queries and responses contained in this book are both the fruit of, and an invitation to, self enquiry. Self enquiry has almost nothing to do with self-analysis, self knowledge or self-criticism. It is not a form of psychoanalysis. nor is it accumulating information about your neuroses, behaviour, family or past. It is the natural functioning of human intelligence left to itself. An intelligence that expresses itself through variations of the question: "what is this?, what is happening?"

Self enquiry is not a methodology, practice or technique, it is a direct, deep looking at that which is apparently happening as life. A looking that is deep and direct enough to reveal quite clearly what is actually happening. In doing so your place in life, in the world becomes unmistakably and reassuringly clear. If you see clearly enough, deeply enough exactly what is happening you will no longer be able to resist life as it actually is by thinking and feeling as if something that actually happened, could or should not have done. This will completely transform and lighten, even perhaps eliminate, your experiences of regret, resentment, shame, pride, guilt, blame, and make such feelings as inadequacy, contempt, envy, hostility, or despair less and less likely. Instead you will find yourself coming to trust life more and more easily, effortlessly and completely.

This trust will be the natural result of your having become intimate with life as it actually is. This intimacy does not depend on your knowing the powerful events of your past that shaped your particular neuroses. It does not depend on you understanding or overcoming your likes, dislikes, fears and hopes. Nor does it mean that you will know or assume that life will never be difficult nor not to your liking. Life is full of difficulties, and plenty of things to dislike. This trust does not depend on you changing the way that you look, think, react or behave. Nor does it depend on you being able to explain everything rationally or consistently: there is more to life than reason and all of it is changing. It depends only on you seeing clearly how your thoughts, feelings, decisions, actions and reactions are inextricably linked to the whole of life: on your seeing clearly that life as a whole is nourishing you, and in all of its details is supporting you. This is not so hard to see. You have only to look in the right direction. This book is intended to help you find that direction. It is not a scientific treatise or a religious text. Read it lightly and you may find something you didn't even know you were looking for.

INTRINSIC MORALITY

Are you not just being semantic here, and trying to justify your lack of conscience when you say you don't feel responsible for your actions?

That's an important question. It needs to be asked and it needs to be answered. First of all you can't not have a conscience unless you have something wrong with your brain, maybe genetically or maybe from taking too much cocaine.

However human conscience is not a universal moral compass that functions according to the same values at all times and in all people. Your conscience is the dynamic residue of your life experience, of your conditioning. Surely genetics plays a part, but the shape that part is given comes from life experience. Life experience is not just a matter of the events and actions to which you have been subject. It is also a matter of what these events have been met with in terms of your learned assumptions, beliefs, desires, needs, values, fears and hopes. Combine these with your social obligations and responsibilities and you have the basic dynamics of a conscience.

When we move in the world we are met by stimuli. Our conscience doesn't have much to do with our responses to natural stimuli, such as rain on a window or wind on your cheek. It comes into play when we are met by social, or human stimuli. Social stimuli are met by our conscience. They are evaluated within the mutable dynamic of our predispositions, assumptions, beliefs, desires, needs, values, fears, hopes, obligations and responsibilities. This is a very open ended dynamic. It's not in any way fixed.

First of all our assumptions, beliefs, desires, needs, values, fears, hopes, obligations and responsibilities are shaped by our experience. New experiences can change them, and intense experiences can give us new ones. As this happens the overall mix changes. Secondly all these different psychosocial factors don't always have the same weight relative to each other. Sometimes a desire rises to the top, sometime a responsibility: in response to circumstance, present and past. How we react to something can depend on what we were doing beforehand. If someone offers you ice cream when you're hot and hungry you are more likely to say yes than when you are cold and full: no matter how much you love ice cream.

So human conscience is alive and breathing according to its own indeterminable, though absolutely determined, rhythms. We can only prioritise our obligations over our needs for so long. We can only prioritise our desires over our responsibilities for a while. There is a continual rhythm

between them. It's not even that we don't always meet the same situation, the same stimuli in exactly the same way. In fact we never do. We never actually encounter the same situation more than once. It's not possible. Location is different, temperature is different, we are a little older and maybe wiser, our conditioning may have changed a little or a lot. There is no repetition in life. The fact that it seems like there is results only from our inattentiveness.

Even though our values, especially our deep values have a very powerful influence on the dynamic of our conscience, not only is that pull different for different people but our deep values, as well as our more superficial values differ from time to time. We grow out of our values in to new ones as we grow up. Values are learned, at least in their final form. Of course there may well be collective archetypes, human or tribal, that underpin our deepest values.

The point is that moral values as we refer to them are a cultural invention, not something intrinsic to life. Different societies value the same actions differently: it depends on the nature and goals of the particular society. We don't have the same values as the Romans , but we have the same basic concepts of virtue, integrity, dignity. We don't necessarily find the same things virtuous or dignified. Besides which different members of the same society prioritise the same values differently. Individuals do not have a fixed scheme of prioritisation. The dynamics of conscience are fluid and ever changing: even if within limits.

Are you saying that human nature is naturally without values, without a moral compass?

I am saying that morality as we conceive it is a psychosocial construct. We invent the notion, though not the need nor tendency. Then we invent the specifics by which the notion is upheld. The need arises from the pressures brought to bear on human beings living in close and dependent proximity to people to whom you have no bonds of blood or marriage. Civilisation, as we quaintly call it, creates the need for morality. Otherwise we are just protecting and defending our own, which is a biological imperative.

Nevertheless, it is very clear to me that there are some fundamental qualities upon which life depends. Just as there are some basic qualities through which consciousness expresses itself. However these are not conceptually derived values, such as social values or moral values that we need to establish and agree to. They are fundamental qualities intrinsic to human consciousness, to human nature. As we become more intimate with what we are we are taken naturally and spontaneously by these qualities: they are our basic qualities. So

we have no need to subscribe, aspire or pretend to them, let alone demand or impose them.

Such as?

First and foremost, there is sensitivity. Without sensitivity there would be, could be no life. Sensitivity to stimuli is the essence and basis of life. Cellular survival, whether it be in the differentiated organisation of your body, or the unicellular simplicity of an amoeba, depends on distinguishing between safe and dangerous stimuli, between painful and pleasurable experiences. This is the basis of organic life.

It is also an expression, on a very rudimentary level, of consciousness. A cell is responsive to its environment, by way of its discriminating sensitivity, which makes it conscious of its environment. Not conscious of itself, not accumulating conscious information, but sensitive, responsive, conscious. There is no life without consciousness. Conscious awareness is another thing. Life apparently had to go through a massive evolutionary journey to arrive at conscious awareness: even longer to arrive at the human experience of self awareness.

Within the awesome evolutionary sophistication of the human design cellular sensitivity becomes much more than pragmatic differentiation. It becomes compassion. This is a very contentious statement, especially to evolutionists. Nevertheless I challenge anyone to become genuinely intimate with the intelligence of life functioning in them most obviously as sensation and deny that compassion is inherent in the human heart.

Intimacy is not the ability to organise information: it's much more nourishing and basic than that. Of course an evolutionist can explain altruism in evolutionary terms, and I have no argument with any of that. What I am saying is that compassion and kindness do not have to be learned. They are intrinsic to human consciousness, and therefore to human life. They are actually the basis of all life in their simplified form of sensitivity. As life becomes more sophisticated on a cellular level, it becomes more sophisticated in its expression of sensitivity.

It's not so hard to rationalise why physical, chemical sensitivity becomes compassion in the sophistication of being human. We need each other being only a part of it. It could more basically be a function of consciousness opening and expanding as it can and does through the sophistication of the human nervous system. I can see other fundamental qualities intrinsic to

being human that forestall any need to construct a moral code with which to regulate and harmonise human society; among them being honesty, openness and generosity.

You consider honesty to be fundamental to human nature? I find that a bit farfetched.

Perhaps that's because you are so dishonest!

well, yes, maybe. I suppose if I am to be honest about it I am not so honest a lot of the time.

No, and that's the way it is in the Kali Yuga. We live in a world where dishonesty and deception are the norm and very hard to do without. Yet this is a learned, contrived situation. We are taught to be dishonest. We are taught to hide our feelings, to pretend to interests we don't have. We have learned to become dishonest, and we need to learn to be dishonest if we are to be welcomed into the dominant tribe of capitalist competitors. However it's not natural to be dishonest. Have you ever seen a cat pretending to be a dog? An acorn trying to become a rose? Nature is by nature honest. Human nature too. Does consciousness tell lies? Or is it the mind, with its culturally learned drives and imperatives that indulges in deception?

So, what you're saying is that there are some fundamental, core values to being human, that actually become obscured by our social conditioning?

Yes, and in becoming obscured we start to think and act as if we are by nature insensitive, dishonest and manipulative. Whereas we have learned to be. The conscience that we each have to navigate by is a learned one. Yet if we start to challenge what we have learned in the light of genuine and deep self enquiry it turns out that there is something natural and innate that you could easily call a conscience and naturally gives us what you could call a moral compass. But it doesn't have to be learned. We have to unlearn to find it. We do that through self enquiry.

EPILOGUE

We are always looking through our own eyes. We are always seeing through our own experience, conditioning, programming. We can never really be sure how close our experience co-incides with the nature of reality, if there actually is such a thing. Yet we can look more closely, we can see more clearly. It is possible for us to use the awesome power of the cortex to see very deeply and very clearly. When we look very deeply the distinctions and divisions of the mind can be seen to be just that: divisions of the mind. It is possible for us to see, recognise, experience and feel the indivisible wholeness of totality. In doing so all particular, partial perspectives resolve into a seamless spectrum of awareness and understanding. This is the awareness and understanding of nonduality.

In effect it is the awareness and understanding of unity, of wholeness. Yet 'nonduality' is a more accurate label. It makes clear immediately that there is no other; that otherness, like selfness, is a function of perspective, or lack of it. The talks in this book are an expression of a nondualistic perspective. I say "a" rather than "the" because much of what it contains contradicts the perspective of many who identify themselves or their understanding as being non-dualistic. However, as long as any trace, however subtle, of autonomy or independence remains in one's thinking then one remains in the grip of dualism. There is no other, or there are billions of separate, struggling selves. Or they each represent a different perspective, a different depth and clarity of understanding. However, from one of these perspectives the other is denied. From one, the other is contextualised and clarified. May your looking deepen, and your seeing clarify until you become, genuinely, completely unconcerned with needing to define or defend your understanding, perspective or life, knowing that to call them yours is only a social convention, and that you are perfect just the way you are.



This collection of talks and discussions asks us to see clearly through the conflicting tides and currents of received opinion we have been clinging to, to a deep trust in life, world and the self.

Challenging the limitations of scientific materialism, and the incoherent narcissism of New Age ideologies. Godfri suggests that the vulnerability, alienation, isolation, anxiety and despair that discolour so many lives result from a culturally endorsed inattentiveness rather than from the threatening nature of reality. Dissecting the ground of our experience as conscious human beings Godfri dissolves the assumptions that drive our sense of separation and aloneness into a recognition of how deeply supported we actually are. Neither an attempt to define the nature of reality, nor to propose how human beings should behave or live, this book offers clear and easily verifiable insights into the nature and significance of the human condition, while resolving the assumed conflict between conditioning and freedom and rescuing both responsibility and morality from an unwarranted nihilism.