



So now we're going to consider two totally connected but different themes.

One tends to excite paranoia amongst the spiritual: being conditioning. The other tends to excite bullshit amongst the spiritual: or karma. First let's contextualise them. In seeing the indivisible wholeness of totality and the inextricable, inevitable and impersonal nature of all actions and objects in their interconnected intricacies, the impression of autonomy, independence and volition dissolves. At least these impressions become more or less transparent. Through that transparency a deeper truth can be seen: that the instruments of action are not their cause. Actions do not belong to their instruments even though instruments are specific, even unique, to particular actions.

Adyashanti, whose credentials are pretty impressive, interestingly says that there are two qualities that invite freedom. A clarity of intention and an intensity of effort are not to be counted among them. The two qualities that are pertinent to freedom are: relaxation and curiosity. Curiosity can be seen as the tendency, drive or even need to enquire.

The recognition that an instrument is not the owner of its actions, but merely the deliverer, raises certain questions: 'what the fuck am I if don't have any autonomy?' 'What the fuck am I if I don't have any independence?' 'What the fuck can I possibly be if I have no free will? Or if the free will I have is merely an impression created by inattentiveness?' And they're good questions. Necessary questions.

Generically the question becomes: “what is a human being from the point of view of action, volition, suffering and freedom?” Not from an organic, chemical or biological point of view but from a functional or deeper or spiritual point of view. What is a human being? What are we, uniquely, each one of us?

One of the terms that I sometimes like to use is an action potential configuration. I actually like to use terms that are quite clear but tend to produce no impression in the mind other than: what the fuck does that mean? Action potential is a biological term to do with the neuro-muscular system. So what does this term mean? If a human being is an action potential configuration, it's beginning to make the term 'human' being sound a little odd. Like something that we might find in an IT laboratory. But what is meant by this APC is that human beings act accordingly. They don't act randomly. From the outside it can look like they are. From the inside it can feel like we are. But actually we act accordingly.

The question is: according to what? The answer is: our action potential configuration. Which means what? It means that we've been configured to specific potential actions: which means that we are inclined to act in particular ways. But this inclination is very strict. It's not like: 'Well I feel a bit like rolling over and going back to sleep this morning.' So a better word than inclination would be 'impelled', 'compelled' to act accordingly, according to the structure of our configuration of potential to act.

The problem is that human beings, unlike laboratory participants, never encounter exactly the same situation again. Every situation that we're in always has new elements, even if it's the second of five surynamaskars, it's not the same as the third or fourth. We're not so awake, we're not so tired, it's not so cold, it's not so warm in the room. The moisture content has changed, our hydration level is different.

Every moment of human experience is totally and utterly unique no matter how many

times the outer shell of it may have been experienced before. This makes it look like our responsiveness to situations is open-ended because we always respond to the supposedly same situation differently. But the situation is different and that's why the response is different. Not because we're choosing or selecting from a range of responses to a particular situation but because that particular situation is demanding, commanding, compelling us to act in a particular way: the exact way that we do act when we're in those exact circumstances.

The configuring of the action potentials of being human is a question of experience. Using Patanjali's terminology: the configuring is samskaras being organised into vasanas producing impulses (pratyaya) to perceive which produce impulses to act. The configuration potential that each one of us has in each moment to act is generated by our past experience organising itself around our genetic capacity. Our genetic capacity DNA is the result of the experience of 3500 million years of evolution. This is one hell of a configuration process. It's a very lengthy process of configuration upon which the action potential of a human being is organised.

This configuration is for each of us the fruit of experience. Each one of us has a unique configuration because each one of us has had a unique path out of that 3500 million years of evolution. But for most of those 3000 million years, our path was shared. And so to a great extent we respond very similarly to the same situations; although slightly differently because of the last 100,000, 50,000 or 25,000 years. We're not in a position to say when each one of us separated from that root of the origins of humanity into a stream or a branching that doesn't include anybody else in this room. It may have only been a thousand years ago we had a grand ancestor in common; it may be 50,000. It's not very long when you consider that the whole process of evolution has taken 3500 million years.

Nevertheless, every action that we've ever taken has been a unique response to a unique set of circumstances. No matter how similar that response might have been

in a similar set of circumstances. Because of the similarity of responses in so many sets of circumstances, it can easily seem like we're not configured to act in a particular way but we're free to select between possibilities. But we already seen that all actions are subject to a matrix of causality that extends back unbroken and unbreakable as far as the human mind in any of its capabilities can go. The word for this situation that we are all in that excites negativity is conditioning. We are conditioned by our own life experience, by our personal DNA, by the evolution of human DNA, by the conditions on this planet, by its place in the solar system, by the place of the solar system in the galaxy. We are conditioned uniquely so that no matter what the circumstantial situation is we have only one possible response. We deliver it willy-nilly whether or not we make a decision to do so or not, whether or not we make a decision to do so or not, whether the action happens spontaneously or after deliberation. We are conditioned totally.

A mind that is not courageous or secure enough to be ruthlessly and relentlessly curious can easily respond to such a statement, that being human is to be totally conditioned, with even an unconscious subliminal: 'but not completely.' This part that some minds would like to insist has not been conditioned within which human freedom supposedly resides has not been found, located or identified. It cannot be found, located or identified. It remains forever at best a hopeful and hopeless speculation. Yet, the sophisticated creativity of the human cortex that permits us such amazing imaginative possibilities continually generates the thought in our minds: 'Oh I shouldn't have done that / if only I had done that / if they hadn't done that...' 'If', 'but' and 'maybe' being the remit of the cortex. You know that feeling. It doesn't matter, maybe nobody else knows what you did, maybe nobody else knows what you said, but it was such a fucking stupid thing in hindsight. You cringe on the inside with embarrassment.

This is the 'if, but, maybe' syndrome, the opening of the door into the Blame Game. That doesn't mean that 'if, but, maybe' are wrong, that they don't belong.

They belong, but not when thinking about the past in terms of what you might/should/could have done. 'If, but and maybe' are more for advanced planning. If I go left, I won't be able to go right but I won't have to carry this so therefore maybe I should leave it behind. Or something like that.

The delicious and delightful irony of the fact that being totally conditioned means we have no freedom to act or choose confers upon us the most amazing freedom. Not a freedom from hunger or thirst. Only death can bring that freedom. Not a freedom from the needs of the body, nor from the needs of the mind. But a freedom from a heavy heart. The kind of freedom that graced Arjuna in his chariot on that sunny day. We know it was a sunny day, not just because it happened in India, but because over in the distance lined up before him he could see the anxious and frightened faces of his very own cousins. And faced with the prospect of seeing one of those well known and deeply loved faces over the top of his arrow tip, knowing therefore that in a millionth of a second they would be dead as his right hand relaxed, Arjuna was plunged into a despair that we cannot possibly imagine the depths of. We may have had our own difficult moments in our life, and met them as he did with a heavy heart, though not that difficult I am sure. Yet he rode forth into battle not long later, with a light heart.

Freedom from a heavy heart, is the prize that comes from feeling beyond any doubt the shackles, the chain of your conditioning. But feeling without any doubt that these so called shackles, or chains, extending everywhere in every direction are actually the lattice of your freedom, not of your bondage. These chains are composed of links. The links being actions, each one of which in being totally inextricable from the indivisible totality of the matrix and being totally necessary to and inevitable, being totally irredeemable and inextricable had to happen, conditioning you to have a heavy heart or not, to let go of the bow string or not.

There is no escape for the human bodimind from conditioning. Its conditioning is its

root, its life, its nature. But human beings as action potential configurations are not robots. They are not the kind of computer programme that we are used to. To imagine that to be configured by and to action as a human being in any way resembles a computer programme is a mistake. Human programming or human conditioning is totally open ended. It may have a root that goes back 3500 million years. It may have layers and layers and layers of deep code that cannot be changed that are totally fixed. But it also has at the surface a breadth and openness of programmability that beggars the imagination.

The possibilities of human action, the possibilities of human imagination are endless. We can't even imagine what they are. Which means that to the extent that we are alive, especially to the extent that we are curious, and therefore opening up constantly new avenues into life, we are being reconditioned, reprogrammed constantly. So there's no need to hold onto a picture, a snap-shot of your conditioning and say: 'Fuck, I don't wanna be like that so I'm just going to pretend I'm not conditioned because I don't like to be conditioned like that.'

Human conditioning is open ended to the extent that it produces openness in the action potential configuration; to the extent that it produces curiosity, to the extent that questions are still being asked. I know that many human beings stop asking questions very soon. You're taught to stop asking questions almost the first day you go to school. This conditioning is so deep that many people succumb to it by the time they leave. They've stopped asking questions so you could say their programming may well have come to a sticky end. And they stay like that more or less for the rest of their lives. But people who end up doing yoga are not normally numbered amongst them. They're coming out of some curiosity, some impulse that has not been conditioned out of them by school such as: 'I wonder if I can get rid of this cellulite.' Or, 'I wonder if I can end up as sexy as Derek Ireland.' Or, 'I wonder if I can improve my lot / establish a more creative relationship with life / become more comfortable in life.' 'I wonder if I can improve my karma' would be the coolest

way to say it in certain circles.

I'm just reminded of this story so I'm going to give myself a break from all this analysis. It happened at a meeting I went to with a certain amount of trepidation. I was a bit ill. I shouldn't have really got on the plane but I had to because circumstances were out of my control. There was a woman there who I was predisposed to be sympathetic to before I'd even got there as I'd been to her website. She was obviously having a hard time with the way the fitness industry was impacting on the world of yoga. She was suffering a lot. At a certain point she let out this desperate squeal of a question: 'Why is my life so hard and everybody else's so easy?'

There was someone else there whose life, at least apparently, was not so tricky. In response to the question he lengthened his spine, opened his chest and said: 'Because you have got something that you need to learn and when you've learnt it, your life will become easier'. He didn't say 'like mine.' I nearly fucking punched him but I contained myself as I didn't think it would go down very well. You can imagine that she went deeper into her feeling of discomfort on hearing this. That she was having bad karma because she was stupid. Because there was something about life that he understood that she did not. This is a very dangerous perspective, especially to interpret karma through. I did write them both an e-mail afterwards. I thought that was a better way to do it than to punch the guy.

I always find it rather funny, rather karmic that my dearly beloved John Lennon was shot dead outside his house having written that song 'Instant Karma'. Karma can look a little bit like a minefield if you're looking at it with wishful thinking, if you're looking at it with the hope of a more comfortable life. But what does karma mean? The word means 'action'. That's all it means. It's not some special esoteric principle hidden in the belly of life. It's the overt face of life unfolding: karma, action. When Jesus says: 'You reap what you sow,' this wasn't a particularly profound statement.

Any farmer could have told you that. Except most of us are a long way from being farmers aren't we? Sometimes when we press the light switch it goes on and sometimes it doesn't. And there's absolutely no sense that we can make of it at all unless we've been a little bit curious and found out about electricity and breaker switches, fuses and corrosion.

Karma is not what you've got coming to you whether you're good or bad. Karma is not what you've got coming to you whether you understand the secrets of the universe or not. Karma is just what's happening everywhere all of the time. Actions following actions, being followed by actions endlessly with an inevitability to each one. With an inextricable inevitability to each one. There's no escape from inevitability. That's what inevitability means. If it was in the past it had to happen, if it's in the present it has to be happening and if it's in the future it has to happen. This is what inevitability means. This is what inextricability demands. This is what indivisible wholeness requires: inevitability.

There is no escape from inevitability; there is no escape from karma. There is no possible escape from conditioning. There is no possible escape from karma. Except a delusional one into the speculative fantasies of the infantile, childish mind. As TS Eliot noted, humanity cannot bear too much reality. So we're running off into the fantasies of the childish mind on a fairly regular basis. It should be no surprise that we accept so readily the conjurings of the childish mind about karma: that we can become free from it. That we can become so spiritual and wise that we can uncover that philosopher's stone of a question that the teacher on my left had not discovered (and as a result was still struggling) and that teacher on my right had discovered and so was sitting pretty. Well, I tell you, he didn't look so pretty to me.

But what does it matter if there's no escape from karma? Shall I put that question differently: who cares if there's no escape from karma? Who gives a shit? So I'm going to tell you another story. This story came by way of Ramesh but it's not about

him. I don't know if it's an older story than that or if it's a story that came to him because of his teaching. There was a guru who had a very, very adept student and after years of study the student felt secure enough to leave his study and go off into the big bad world. But they kept up a correspondence which is the normal kind of chela/guru communication: chela wanted to tell the guru how deep his understanding has become and the guru responded accordingly, according to his conditioning.

After a long silence from the chela the guru became concerned that he had not heard from the chela for a long time. So he sent the chela a message saying: 'How is your understanding now?' Or, 'how is your life now?' And the response that came immediately back to the guru was: 'Who cares?' All of a sudden the chela had become the guru and the guru the chela. In seeing clearly not only the inextricable and inevitable nature of action, but the impersonal nature of action, by seeing the illusory nature of action, no more doer can be identified. No more doers can anywhere be seen. There is no-one left to care about the evaluation of understanding, although caring, compassion will definitely remain. No one left to be concerned, to be troubled about what's coming, about karma's inevitable arrival. What this means is that there is no escape from karma.

But there is an escape from the pressure of karma in seeing that you're totally conditioned. You're so totally conditioned as a bodimind that there is no room left for an independent, autonomous doer, thinker, decider, chooser within that conditioned action potential configuration. There is no room for anyone to have any karma. The karma belongs to totality just as the actions belong to totality and just as the actions are delivered through specific instruments, the karma unfolds through specific instruments. But it points to nothing other than totality, the conditioned web of totality.

So the only possible freedom from conditioning, from karma, is the freedom that

arises when you see that you are not the doer, the chooser, the decider. You are not what you had taken yourself to be. But seeing that you are not what you take yourself to be is a far deeper seeing than seeing the conditioned nature of all phenomena. Seeing through what you had taken yourself to be. Seeing through first of all your illusory freedom, seeing through volition, seeing through the self, seeing it to be the mirage that it is, must go deeper. Because there is more to being human than a body. There is more to being human than a mind and a body.

But this more to being human has never, ever surrendered itself nor will it, to any laboratory experiment. It has never been seen, touched, heard or felt. And never will it be. It will never be subject to the quantification of the scientific method. It will never subscribe to the limitations of knowledge. But it is no less, even much more, a part of being human than the body part or the mind part. Most people know what you mean when you say body because bodies have been deeply subject to the quantitative method of science and knowledge. Most people have a rough idea of what you mean by mind. But many are the ideas and many are the terms that refer to this other aspect of being human. An aspect which also must be realised for freedom from conditioning, from karma to result. Which cannot mean the end of conditioning, nor can it mean the end of karma.

It is this that you could say the lens of yoga points to. The lens of yoga is focused through the body and it's focused through the mind upon something, and by something, else. As long as you take yourself to be the bodimind, as long as you take yourself to be old or young, fat or short, tall or thin, curious or bored, intelligent or stupid, happy or sad, then karma is wrapping itself around you with unbreakable chains, heavy and dragging. This nameless aspect of being human, to which yoga points, is the great mystery or the greatest joke of all time.

So subtle in its nature; so universal in its nature, that its going unseen leaves us with only the bodimind to claim as our own. 'This is me, what I think, what I feel, what I

have done, what I intend to do.' This is all that is left, a totally conditioned action potential configuration over which we have zero control. That's an absolute zero. That's not a zero qualified by any 'ifs but or maybes' at all. And that's what we reduce ourselves to. That's what we have reduced ourselves to: a machine, a robot, having so deeply lost touch with what we actually are. Taking ourselves to be what we appear to be.

When we discover that what we appear to be is totally conditioned of course we're likely to freak out and resist. But if we are curious enough we'll keep on asking, questioning. That curiosity alone can perhaps bring us to what we actually are. Within that discovery, recovery, whatever words you'd like to use, there is no bondage of any kind. There is nothing bindable, nothing to be bound. There is no subject or object of any karma or any conditioning. Conditioning is still there, karma is still there but no one to whom it belongs.

But our identification with the mind, with our thoughts, feelings, plans, emotions, memories, intentions, desires and fears; and our identification with our body, with our experiences, capabilities and actions is so deep, so heavy and so strong that it is not enough to intellectually understand that we are not the body and not the mind. It doesn't help to be told that you are God if the weight of that identification is still bearing down upon you on the chains of conditioning and karma. The weight can only be dissolved directly.

The joke, the biggest joke of all time, is that you can do nothing to bring this about. That's only half a joke; what makes it funny is that it's being prevented from happening by everything that you're trying to do, by everything that you're seeking. There's nothing you need to do, there's nothing you can do to cut through the bonds of your identification with body and mind. There's no information that can help you to do something better that you've been doing. There's no suggestion that anybody can make for you to do something that you haven't yet done that can free you from

the weight of identification of the body with the mind. The only possibility is to let go or surrender all doing.

This cannot be done. You cannot 'do' surrender. You cannot 'do' letting go. It is an event that happens only as a result of clear seeing. Some people might like to use a heavy duty word and say 'insight.' Seeing clearly, seeing into so deeply that you see straight through. All that needs to be clearly, irrevocably, irrefutably seen is that within the conditioned nature of all phenomena there is no doer that needs to do anything. The doing is just happening. Not at random, not arbitrarily, but according to the configuration of karma: the totality of karma, the totality of the indivisible wholeness of it all.

The joke is, every human being who is not struggling to survive or who has come to the end of seeking is seeking. They may not know what they are seeking. They may not realise that they are seeking but we are all seeking the same thing. Call it freedom, call it peace, satisfaction, enlightenment. It doesn't matter what the word is. Some of us are still seeking it through money perhaps. Some of us are still seeking through pleasure, or a mixture perhaps. Some of us are perhaps seeking it through meditation. Some of us are perhaps seeking it through yoga. Some of us are perhaps seeking it through wrapping ourselves up in moral injunctions and ethical imperatives. Some of us are seeking it in books: holy books, erudite books, esoteric books, practical books.

The irony is that it's in that seeking that we lose touch with what we are seeking. We lose touch with what we are and we convince ourselves that we are the bodimind and that therefore the nature of our karma is important and we must rectify it as much and as soon as possible.