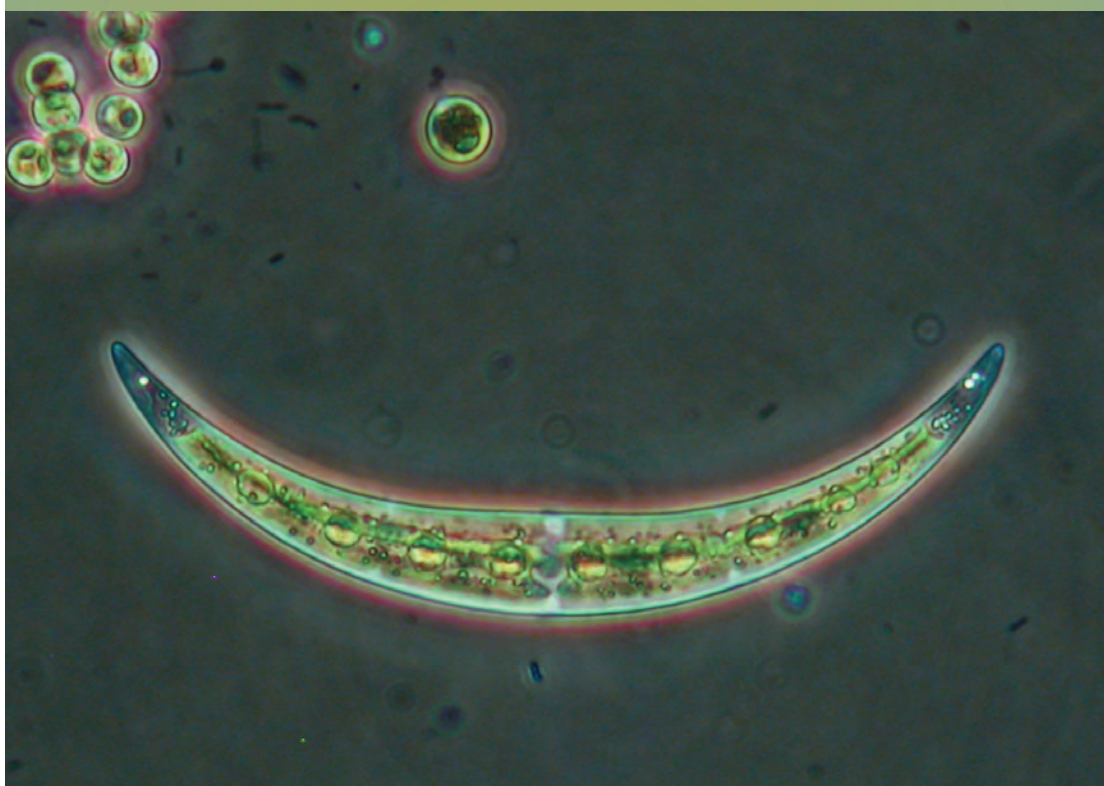
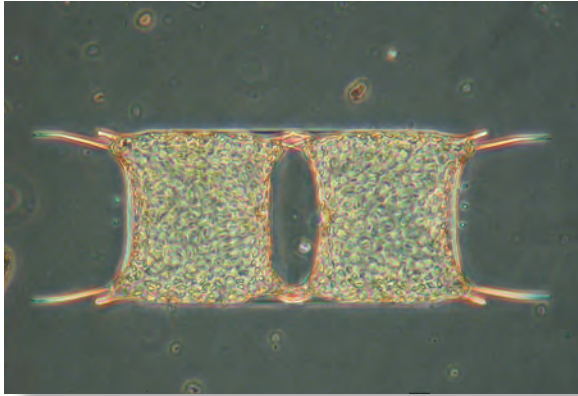


Contemplating Illusion Through Loving All Life



Lama Mark Webber



The marine diatom *Odontella sinensis*. Two cells.
Torpedo Bay Wharf, Hauraki Gulf.

We spend years altering the objects in our life. We try and get all the objects in our world just right, to make us feel good. It is as if we can line up all the entities in our spaces and get the combination just right! Yet, it never really works, it is never fully satisfying and we know that! Some event comes along to jar the illusion, but the vast majority of beings ignore that fact.

For billions of humans life is downright painful. Billions of people are just trying to be fed and feed their children, or keep their children from suffering an early death. Millions starve to death, while a few of us get more obese and rich. We drive or fly around in vehicles run on converted food or energy that could feed billions. Pure bewilderment. Pure bewitchment. A bad dream. Everything keeps coming apart, nothing is stable, all is changing, and a quality of dissatisfactoriness often creeps in. The vast majority of us do not question this dilemma, we follow the cultural norms and keep trying to be happy. Some succeed to a degree, living in a walled off, jewelled city of bewilderment, while many are miserable for parts of their life. What time do they have to contemplate the dilemma of being human—of thinking, self-referencing, feeling, and experiencing—when they are just trying to live another day, or daily purchase

their way out of dis-ease and anxiety? Or existing in hell states like picking through smouldering garbage heaps to barter for another meal. Do you doubt the truth of suffering?

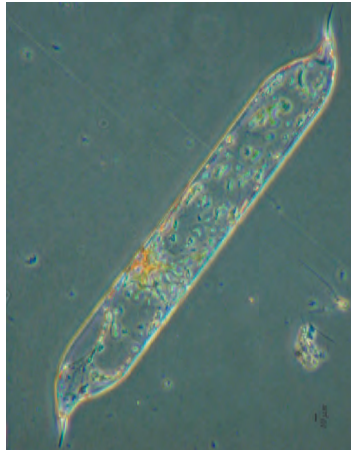
Compassion!

We could erroneously conclude, perhaps pretend for a while, that only people, places, and objects can make us happy for some unspecified duration of time. We never know! The uncertainty of change is very high. But we habitually keep trying! Is that not odd? Perhaps silly? Maybe even funny that creatures would do this to themselves!

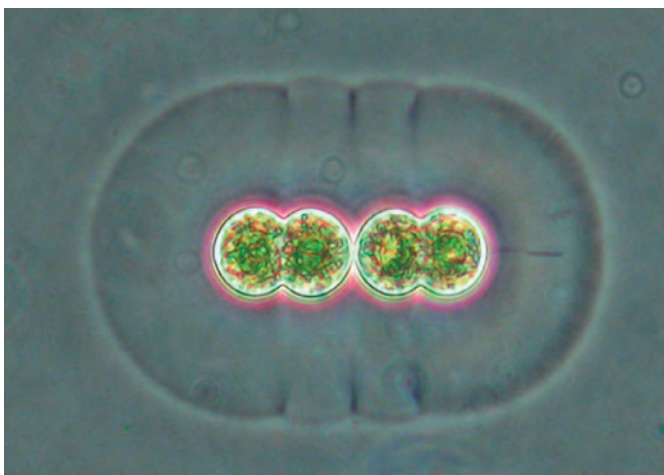
Without mental grasping we will see the world as illusory, like a never-ending series of mirages or a dreamscape. Very clear, without a spaced-out or dreamy mind. Just like a dream, every time we grasp something, it changes and morphs into something else.

Breaking Up the Illusion

What we thought we had, is not. What we thought we knew, is not. What we love, is not. Nothing at all is like we thought or felt! Go very deep, be heroic, be the Heruka. Even the experience of being here, now, is illusion. It's a fabrication of now-ness. Is your experience of mindfulness real or projected? Are you so sure that an experience of touch, seeing, or hearing exists? Pay very close attention, for many days, to any sense experience as pure sensory data, and one will start to glimpse the illusion breaking apart; like



The marine diatom
Pseudosolenia calcar-avis.
Hauraki Gulf.



The desmid *Spondylosium panduriforme*. Two cells.
Kelland Ponds.

tears in a fabric, a pointillist painting, a fissure in space-time, or a mirage. Take a close look at dreams and daily waking experience; do they exist at all like we thought or want? Find out what dreams are really made of and we see the illusoriness of all experience.

When we stay entranced and attached to all the dream symbols, images, and cool events that happen in dreams—endless printouts in variety and meaning—we lose a precious opportunity to meditate on the actual nature of the dream experience. So too for the waking dream. To not get entranced in the objects of the dreaming consciousness takes great mindfulness and determination; we bring awareness of the Mahamudra into the dreamscape, day and night. Open up to space and light, search for the very basis. Pierce through these veils to an awareness of pristine awareness, like diving into a glacial mountain stream!

The illusion that one can hold any fixed mental position even for a millisecond is untrue. All mental objects, thoughts, and sensations are fabricated. Don't believe me, take a close look. To do so will take pellucid, naked mindfulness and inquiry, unbroken by thoughts and distractions. No amount of intellectual certainty will

be enough. Reading a modern neuro-cognitive textbook that says the same thing will not be enough. Yet the illusion of permanency and constancy, formed by a lifetime of talking brain cell clusters makes this fabrication appear to be very real. In modern neuro-cognitive terms, these fabrications are ‘maps’ in the mind. Our images and concepts of body, feelings, self and other, are but maps. The tree you see, the bell you hear are not out there; however something is, but ‘it’ is fantastically vast in scope.

Cutting Through to Naked Experience

Ordinary experience, even most profound meditation and visionary experiences, are not what is. Experiences appear solid only by conditioning. Knock out those brain cells, those patterns or maps formed by normal conditioning, through physical-mental trauma or temporarily through insight meditation, and it all goes. Deeply relax the rigidity via deep meditation and the illusion vanishes. It only takes a small needle in a small part of the brain, and a human cannot recognize him or her-self, even when looking in a mirror. Or use the sharp needle of penetrative insight, while looking in a mirror: “Is that Uncle Fred or perhaps... it is familiar... yes, hummm, Aunt Marge perhaps in that mirror? And, more precisely, what do you call that thing I am looking at!”

Many illusions, really delusions, appear to exist, veils upon veils. There’s the illusion that heaps of information are the same as meaningful content. The illusion of not needing a Noble Mentor. The illusion of permanency. The illusion of concreteness. The illusion that one can hold any fixed mental position. The illusion of self. The illusion of not-self. The illusion of separate entities. The illusion of happiness. The illusion of unhappiness. The illusion that objects are bad or good. The illusion that we can Google our way out of this thicket. The illusion that all thoughts are bad. The illusion that thought is ultimately bad. The illusion of speech as an inferior

way of communicating. The illusion of everlasting peace. The illusion of space and light. Even the illusion of some-body to become enlightened. The illusion of a mind! Cut through them all! Cessation of clinging means cessation of clinging!

How many nice Buddhists keep forgetting the Four Noble Truths? Far too many! Practitioners are often looking for some higher, deeper, more esoteric instructions. Finding something better than “Cease clinging (tanha) and dukkha ceases?” Trying to negotiate out of the truth?

St. John of the Cross, a Spanish saint of the 16th century, declared the vital point of non-clinging in his famous and glorious poem, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*:

*When you turn toward something
you cease to cast
yourself upon the all
For to go from the all to the all
you must leave yourself in all
And when you come to the
possession of all
you must possess it
without wanting anything*

*In this nakedness the spirit
finds its rest, for when it
covets nothing, nothing
raises it up, and nothing
weighs it down, because it is
in the centre of its humility.
When it covets something
In this very desire it is wearied.³*

Compassion!