

Q: Hey Robert! I'm sad to hear that you are canceling the gathering, but on the other hand, excited for the chance to interact with you online in whatever format you end up creating the event.

I have a follow-up question from one of our previous conversations. Based on your understanding of Life and what you express in your books, how do you handle being with people close to you like your wife, family, and friends who are living in anxiety and fear? Do you try to help them in any way? How do you respond to their suffering?

A: It's important to meet people where they are and not imagine that you can teach them to be different by lecturing at them. The best influence is by example, not jawboning. Listening quietly with an open mind is a basic communication skill.

Q: It's really hard for me to watch my wife going through what she is going through, knowing that life is a gift ("this aliveness," as you put it), and seeing her completely obsessed with her thoughts and symptoms, without being able to do anything useful apart from being her caretaker. It's almost like I want her to see the possibilities, the potential for recovery, but she doesn't. As you said, it's hard to swallow.

A: Almost always, I find, it's best to keep your discomfort to yourself and deal with it yourself instead of trying to change people because it's hard for you to be around them or hard for you to watch them suffer.

Usually, people have to come to their own balance and not be coached into the one you think they ought to have. If you watch

what I do here, I don't give advice unless I am asked for it directly. And for many of us, marriage may be a bit more difficult in the time of Covid. Saying less may be best.

Q: I don't seem to have that power neither does she.

A: Right. You don't have that power. You are going to do and say what you must just like everyone else. If you see that plainly, you will see simultaneously that your wife is in the same boat. That's love and marriage. Hang in there, bro.

Q: Thanks, Robert. I will, and I get what you say.

On another subject, I've rewatched your interview with Tim Freke and there was something I want to ask you about, something I was really keen on exploring. It was about his assumption that our human condition seems to limit the amount of what we can focus on each moment.

That also aligns with what you write about that philosopher who says our minds didn't evolve to be able to understand and explain everything.

We seem limited to the number of relational points we can grasp to make sense of something.

There could be infinite points to process, but we will always pick some, never all.

A: I don't recall what was said about that with Tim, but my memory for past conversations is not always sharp.

Yes, Peter Zapfee is brilliant on human cognitive limitation. Check him out.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Wessel_Zapffe

Q: So my question is this. Is that why you say we must give up on trying to *know* things? Because we will never be able to see all the relationships between all possible points of information that can exist?

A: There is nothing wrong with learning and knowing things. I am all for it. But there are many more questions than there are factual answers.

If you ask questions about ultimate matters, all manner of answers will be forthcoming, but no facts. No one knows what any of this is or how one apparent entity relates to another. No one. God, nonduality, souls, the "life force," karma, etcetera, are not facts, but beliefs.

We see what we see through human eyes with a human mind, and that's the limit. There are wiseacres and wannabe teachers on every street corner, but no one, I say, has any real answers to ultimate questions.

Some people see Peter Zapffe as pessimistic. I don't. I do not, like Peter, wish I had never been born, but I see what can appear to be pessimism more as his approach to realism. I mean realism as opposed to idealistic hopes of perfection and transcendence.

But Peter's view and mine are not for everyone. Such realism, which offers no escape hatch from the biological facts of nature,

can appear a bit dark and bleak.

That's what I meant earlier. I have a perspective that I consider "awake," but I am not going to force it on anyone. It's not a bed of roses. Many people desire something more comforting, and they may need it, for all I know. So much of what we seek to believe may be motivated by fear of falling into depression and despair.

It's tempting to attribute powers to human beings that we do not, in fact, enjoy. That habit can be intoxicating and self-hypnotic, but also delusional. Some people project those delusions onto figures they don't even know and will never meet. Many of those figures are dead and gone, but the projections continue. At least a living human can be questioned and asked to explain. A paragon from the past never can.

That's why "awake," as I mean it, requires killing the Buddha, not emulating him or anyone else.

But it's not my place to define realism for anyone else. If I am asked, I say what I see. If no one asks, remaining silent is good too.

I wish you well.