

Delicate Activism
Working towards a different way of seeing



This is the time of corona
when half the world is locked away,
when the world feels governed by fear
when conviction dissolves into doubt;
out there is noise
a cacophony of opinion
inside ourselves is eerie quiet
and question

What does a delicate activism
have to say at a time like this
when we are not allowed to meet or greet;
when we are largely silenced

A delicate activism works through observation
more than rhetoric,
recognising that the way we attend to the world
changes the world

It builds a poetic
rather than an antagonism
discovering that we are
implicate
at every moment

The kind of observation
that plays a healing role in the world
can never be instrumental
and is self-observation
at its core

As Yeats wrote,
“we make out of the quarrel with others rhetoric,
but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry.”

Fluidity in thinking;
inside of a delicate activism
our thinking is independent and free
our seeing never a passive recording
but a consciously intentional *doing*,
so we move beyond thoughts into thinking
we move beyond perceptions into seeing –
our thinking and our seeing
can exist only
in the *doing*

In this time of corona
when we are steered towards a confusion
that risks the very earth we walk
that endangers this sacristy of consciousness
that is human *being*,
to be a delicate activist means
to resist the dangers of passivity;
it means
to strengthen our thinking and our seeing
so that we may form a guardianship
of both earth and awareness,
whether outwardly locked or unlocked –
as Goethe put it,
'there is no inner,
there is no outer
hold this close
this holy open secret'

A Way of Working

We feel, very palpably, the *aliveness* of this practice. And we are challenged, every day, as to what it takes to keep it alive. We have felt more forcefully than ever, during this time of corona, the inner work that is required to keep this practice alive in such a way that it is an ongoing expression of itself. We are very nervous of working online; there is always the danger that the work become commodified, instrumentalised, that it become a product, too easily and glibly conveyed through on-line lessons and teachings. There is danger in the loss of intimacy entailed by relationships and learning unmediated by the nuance of body.

Yet we cannot physically reach each other. And we all need to keep the practice alive if it is to remain alive; we all know how quickly it disappears when we stop *doing* it – this relationship between *doing* and *occurrence* is part of the nature of the practice.

So we face a very particular challenge. We have observed how so quickly there has been a movement towards 'going on-line', translating living practices into on-line products. It is so hard for us to imagine doing this, *our* work, solely on-line. And yet, at the same time, we are very aware that we do – at this time – need to find creative ways of reaching each other, so that the practice can continue to be nurtured. Finding this balance feels like a microcosm of the larger reality that we all find ourselves in: how to experience the rich opportunities available to us all during this time of the world-slowing-down, of something quieter and closer to the pulse of the Earth happening all around. Experiencing the silence that has eluded us in our previous lives, feeling the weight of how much we have allowed particular life-choices to close in on the world, to diminish and close life down and in. Listening to the world breathe in new ways; there's something quite miraculous about this.

We have thought about how we can work with you during this time to help to keep this practice living through your daily realities. This practice remains alive *through the doing*: it is renewed at every moment that we are practising; it is not simply something that can be acquired through study alone, through reading alone. The practice is active; through its disciplined gaze it discovers and reveals the *relationship* between all that is alive. Through the warmth of our full attention, from wherever we are, the world can begin to shimmer with a depth of life and meaning.

In the absence of being able to meet, we would like to offer – and to work alongside you as and if you take them up – ways of keeping supple with this work, mobile and attentive, and connected with yourselves, with one another, with the earth and with the social world of which you are a part. Ways of deepening this practice as you have already begun to understand it. Ways of combining a limited amount of online work with your own centered practice of attention and life.

Our Idea

We imagine a process through which you would be working individually, on the one hand, and in small Zoom groups (together with us and also in smaller groups that you will be forming) on the other hand. We are convinced that the group work is a necessary and essential support to your own individual practice. It is through the coming together of individuals that so much of the richness of this practice is realised, strengthened and deepened. Yet this coming together will not be fruitful without your individual practice work as a vital component.

We envisage an initial three-month programme, beginning in May, and ending at the end of July. We will meet together to begin the programme, to greet one another, to connect with the deeper purpose of this group and gathering, and to create the smaller groups within which you will be working (a three-hour session).

From there, you would find a regular working rhythm with your smaller group – which will comprise three people in total – where you can meet and work through the exercise that we have given for the three-week period until the following plenary session. The exercises will be contingent on regular (though not necessarily frequent) meetings between you, and contingent on the individual attention that you will be giving to the exercise between these meetings. Every third week, we will have a session with the whole group, to share experiences emerging out of the exercise and how it has evolved in the smaller groups.

In this way we will complete five plenary sessions in the three-month period (including the initial session) as well as four in-depth exercises and processes. We (Allan and Sue) will be available to connect with you – either individually or with your smaller group – at any time during these months, should you wish for such a meeting. At the end of July, we will together decide whether and how we wish to continue.

As you can see, we are attempting to make this process as light as possible in terms of virtual meeting; and as a way of offering a disciplined and supported container for keeping this practice alive in you.

Timing

We ask that you send us your response to this invitation by **Wednesday 6th May LATEST**

Please contact us via email at: proteusinitiative@gmail.com

We want to start the opening Zoom plenary session on **Wednesday 13th May** (actual timing will depend on the range of places where people are living).

The Financials

We would like to ask you to work with the idea of a contribution towards this process, which we leave to your discretion. We will be open and transparent, and will keep you up to date about how much time it is taking for us to hold this process with you, and allow this to guide your contribution, without any sense of coercion or obligation at all.

We look so forward to hearing from you, to hearing whether this resonates with you, whether you would like to participate on this journey with us and other practitioners, some of whom you will know, and others not. This 'online' initiative is not to replace anything that we have already committed ourselves to offering (which may be postponed) but is a way of acting in a time of physical disconnect – to strengthen ourselves.