



See The Universe In A Sunflower, by Thich Nhat Hanh

I live in Plum Village, in the Dordogne region of southwest France, an area known for its sunflowers. But people who come to Plum Village in April do not see any sunflowers. They hear people saying that there are many sunflowers around, but they cannot see them anywhere. However, if you ask the farmers in the region, they will tell you that they can see the sunflowers very well, because they have already sown the sunflower seeds. They have ploughed the earth, sown the seeds, and spread manure. They know that there only needs to be one more condition for the sunflowers to manifest. That final condition is warmth. As the weather begins to warm up, the sunflower seeds will sprout, and, if the weather continues to be warm in June or July, the sunflowers will bloom.

So the farmers can see things that the visitor cannot yet see. We say that there isn't a sunflower here because we cannot see all the latent causes and conditions lying in wait. We have the tendency to think that as long as we can't see the sunflowers, they don't exist, and that once we can see the sunflowers, they suddenly do exist.

The words "do not exist" are not really correct, but the words "do exist" are not correct either. When something has not yet manifested, we tend to think that it's in the realm of nonbeing, and when it manifests we say that it's in the realm of being. But the two categories of being and nonbeing do not correspond to reality. That is why we shouldn't wait until we see big yellow flowers blooming in the fields to say that the sunflowers are there. They are there, just hidden, and whether or not we see them is only a matter of time and latent conditions.