



## THE WONDER OF BEING

Awakening to an Intimacy Beyond Words

by Jeff Foster

Published by Non-Duality Press

[www.non-dualitypress.com](http://www.non-dualitypress.com)

*A combined and revised edition of Jeff Foster's first two books*

*'Life Without A Centre' and 'Beyond Awakening'*

**What if life is infinitely simpler than you ever imagined?**

We spend our lives seeking wealth, success, love, fulfilment, and even 'spiritual enlightenment' in the future. Yet right at the heart of life there is an intimacy, a simplicity, a wholeness that is totally beyond words – and which cannot be reached through any kind of effort. In our attempts to change, to improve ourselves, or become 'enlightened', we end up ignoring this wordless intimacy which is our birthright and our true home.

*The Wonder of Being* points to the eternal freedom which exists beyond the seeker and the sought, and shows us the hidden assumptions that underlie our seeking activities. With great humour, compassion and clarity, Jeff Foster reminds us of something we have always known – that life, as it is, is a miracle... and beyond our thoughts, we are already free.

# Excerpts from the book...

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am not here to teach you how to become an awakened or enlightened person, how to have spiritual experiences or enter spiritual states. All states and experiences, even the most blissful ones, come and go. They are beautiful, and very pleasurable, but they are time-bound, and so they come and go.

This book is about that which does not come and go. It points to a possibility that goes *beyond* your attempts to awaken, your search for enlightenment, and your experiences of states of bliss, peace, joy, silence, and so on; a possibility that goes right to the core of who you really are, beyond who you think you are. It points to the wordless essence beyond the passing forms of this world, an essence which, in the final analysis, is not separate from the forms that appear. This is what I feel is the true meaning of the word 'nonduality'.

It takes no time to be what you already are, but it *appears* to take time to recognise what you are not. As long as words are needed, this book meets you in your dream of individuality, to remind you of something that you've always known.

And when words are no longer needed, well, that's when the adventure really begins.

With love from yourself,

**Jeff Foster**

Brighton, England, March 2010

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## BEYOND WORDS

Right at the heart of life, there is a simplicity that is totally beyond words.

Yet the moment we attempt to speak about this simplicity, the moment we try to put it into words, in a sense we've killed it. As the Tao Te Ching has been reminding us for over two thousand years:

“The tao that can be told  
is not the eternal Tao.  
The name that can be named  
is not the eternal Name.

The unnameable is the eternally real.  
Naming is the origin  
of all particular things.”

This is really a book about something that cannot be put into words: the fact that right at the heart of life, right where you are, right here and right now, a miracle is happening.

And what is that miracle?

It is the present moment.

It is *everything*: present sights, sounds and smells, bodily sensations, the heart beating, breathing...

It is life itself.

It is everything and it is *nothing*: No thing. Beyond the stories we tell about life, beyond our concepts, beyond our beliefs and ideas, beyond our ideologies and complicated philosophies, beyond time and space, there are no separate ‘things’ in existence. Beyond the dream of duality, there is no separation whatsoever. Here is a timeless truth that goes right to the heart of all religions and spiritual traditions, and ultimately right to the heart of modern science too. Underneath all the dichotomies that define our lives, there is a single underlying reality (call it the Tao, call it Buddha Mind, or Advaita, or Brahman, or Life Itself, or Energy, or call it nothing at all...) and that reality is not separate from what we are. As the quantum physicist Erwin Schrödinger so beautifully put it:

“What we observe as material bodies and forces are nothing but shapes and variations in the structure of space. Particles are just *schaumkommen* (appearances). The world is given to me only once, not one existing and one perceived. Subject and object are only one. The barrier between them cannot be said to have broken down as a result of recent experience in the physical sciences, for this barrier does not exist.”

Beyond thought, nothing is separate from anything else. Yet out of that Unnameable Mystery, the words arise, the thoughts appear, the separation does its little dance, and this is the play of duality within nonduality - and it is ultimately impossible to speak about.

So you may ask: Why write a book about something that is too present, too alive, too intimate, and therefore too *paradoxical* to put into words?

Why try and use dualistic language to communicate that which is beyond duality?

Why not simply stay silent and be done with it?

This is a very good question!

Well, although words will never *capture* this simplicity, perhaps they can *point* to it.

You see, that's what all the words in this book really are: *pointers*. Nothing more, nothing less. They point back to the Source, to the origin of all things, which in the final analysis is identical with what you really are, beyond your mind-made life story, and identical with life itself, as it dances in emptiness.

*Appearance and essence are not-two*. Further than that we cannot go in words.

Pay too much attention to the pointers, and you'll end up missing what the pointers are pointing to. As they say in Zen, if you pay too much attention to the finger pointing at the moon, you'll miss that beautiful moon...

Now, I'm sure that any half-decent philosopher would be able to tear many of the arguments in this book into shreds. He or she might claim that many statements in this book are illogical, that parts of the book contradict other parts, that the text flies in the face of rationality and even common sense, that the ideas presented here are radical or even downright crazy. That is fine. I am not here to convert anyone to a new way of thinking, to impose a new belief system upon anyone, or start a new religion. What is being communicated in this book goes beyond that whole 'I have the truth and you don't' game that we love to play. It is a possibility that cuts through to the very heart of things.

It goes beyond 'my religion versus your religion', 'my God versus your God', or 'my beliefs versus your beliefs'. This possibility goes beyond everything that apparently separates us. It reaches beyond 'I'm a Christian, you're a Jew', beyond 'I'm black, you're white', beyond 'I'm right, you're wrong', beyond even 'I'm a man, you're a woman'. It is far beyond 'I'm enlightened, you're unenlightened', 'I'm awake and you're not', 'I *get it* and you don't', 'I'm nondual but you're still dual', or even 'I'm here and you're there'. Beyond all of these dualistic opposites - that's where the true freedom lies.

Beyond logic, beyond rationality, beyond thought itself, to the wordless silence at the heart of things: that is where all the words in this book are pointing.

You will need to leave the logical mind behind if you are to go any further. This is a journey into aliveness, into life itself, not into the intellect.

## SHARING THIS

I do not consider myself to be a teacher. You see, I don't have anything to *give* you. I don't have anything that you don't.

I simply don't have anything to teach, but perhaps, just perhaps, I have something to share. And if what is being shared in this book is really seen, you'll also see that I'm only sharing this with myself, because *I am what you are*. Beyond our life stories, there is nothing that could possibly separate us. This is not a communication from person to person, from separate individual to separate individual, from teacher to student, but a sharing from life to itself. So ultimately, it's not really a 'sharing' at all, but here we reach the limits of language!

Language cannot say what cannot be said. But perhaps language, used in a certain way, can help *point* to that which cannot be said.

Now, here's the good news: you don't need to *understand* anything that is being said here. Beyond the attempt of the mind to understand, and beyond any confusion that you may experience while reading, there can be *a resonance, a recognition, a knowing* that is deeper than any words. A lot of people read my books and tell me that they don't *understand* what is being said, but at the same time they *know* it, and they've always *known* it. They don't understand it, but they know it more clearly and more directly than they've ever known anything.

I'm not here to teach you anything, but perhaps I'm here to remind you of something that you already know.

This book may challenge your concepts about what 'spirituality' is and isn't. It will question the idea that there is, in fact, anything in the world separate from anything else, that there is a 'seeker' separate from what is sought, that there is a 'me' separate from 'you', that enlightenment is not already here, that the Kingdom of Heaven lies beyond, that Oneness is somewhere 'out there'.

This book is really about the *end* of seeking, the end of striving, the end of suffering, the end of the idea that you are a little person in a big world, somehow separate from wholeness. It points to a gentle explosion into something far more powerful, far more joyful, and far simpler than anything we were promised by the teachings of the world. It points back home.

The end of the spiritual search is an *absolutely radical acceptance of what is*. And this acceptance, this seeing through, is not done by *you*, the individual. This acceptance is not a doing, not an achievement, not the result of anything. This acceptance is in the nature of things, as they already are.

*Already*, everything arises spontaneously, freely, of its own accord.

*Already*, the universe accepts everything, unconditionally, as it is.

*Already*, as the Buddha saw so clearly, there is no separate self.

This is the mystery that we'll be exploring.

## YOUR OWN ABSENCE

We've all had at least a *taste* of it: the falling away of everything. It can happen anywhere, at any time: during a walk through the park, or while listening to your favourite piece of music, or perhaps while looking into the eyes of a loved one. All past and future fall away, all ideas of a future attainment, a future happiness, a future 'enlightenment' simply dissolve into the vast open space which embraces everything. In that falling away, there is a simplicity, an intimacy, a freedom without a name. It's totally beyond words, and yet it's as obvious as breathing. It's a glimpse into what you really are, beyond any story about what you are.

We've all experienced it. We call it 'love', but it is so much more than our concepts about love. Or we call it 'peace', but it is really a peace that goes beyond any ideas we have about peace. It is also 'beauty', but it is beauty without an object. It is 'freedom' too, but it is a freedom without anyone there to own freedom.

To the mind, these moments (although we cannot really call them 'moments' because they are beyond time altogether) are without worldly value. To the mind, in a sense what we are talking about here is *nothing*. To the mind, what value does its own absence have? No value. Why? Because there is nobody there to claim any value!

Of course, what the mind could never see is that *nothing* is *everything*. Your absence is identical with the presence of the world – this is what the word 'nonduality' really points to. Again, we must leave words behind.

*It is because there is no solid, separate person at the centre of life, that life can appear as it does.*

This book is a journey into that absence, an absence which finally reveals itself to be life in its fullness, a perfect presence. Emptiness is form, as the Buddhist Heart Sutra reminds us.

*At this point the seeking mind says, 'That's all well and good, but what's in it for me?'*

You see, the mind always wants something *more* – some new content, some new idea or belief system, something new to chew on. It hunts around the world, feeding itself, ingesting second-hand concept after second-hand concept from books, from teachers, from perceived authorities. The mind is a seeker; it is always hungry for *more*. Whether it's the search for worldly success, or happiness, or permanent pleasure, or eternal peace, or spiritual enlightenment, it's essentially the same movement of thought. A search always implies that something has been lost, that something here is not quite right, that there is something *lacking* in the universe. That is why the search for enlightenment is essentially no different from the search for worldly success. This is a *very* hard pill for the spiritual seeker to swallow!

The lack seems to be infinite. No matter how much you fill the void, there is still more of it to fill! No wonder we are always left feeling unsatisfied, discontented, incomplete.

This book will not exacerbate the problem and give food to an already inflated ego. Like a Zen koan, it will not add any content, provide any new concepts or beliefs with which the ego could bolster itself. This refusal to provide something concrete for the mind to chew on can be very frustrating for a seeker looking for *something*.

Yes, this is really a book about nothing, but still, sometimes a book about nothing can be the most helpful thing – especially when the search for *something* has only ever led to frustration and bitter disappointment, and taken you away from what really matters: that is, the present appearance of life, and the wonder of Being.

## **STORY OF A NOBODY**

I don't want to dwell on my past, because really it has nothing to do with this message, and very little to do with this present life. However, some history ('his story') may help to put this book into context.

Do remember, this is just a story, no more or less important than any other story.

Several years ago I embarked on a full-blown spiritual search, fuelled by the desire to escape the pain and misery of a lifetime. My life had become unbearable, and I was desperate for a way out. Modern psychology hadn't worked for me – it only seemed to deal with surface issues. I didn't want to 'fit in' or 'adapt to society', I wanted to wake up. I didn't want to be comfortable, I wanted

to be free. And so I turned to the teachings of enlightenment.

For over a year I shut myself off totally from ordinary life. My only goal was to awaken once and for all, to shed the sense of being a separate person and live as Oneness. Nothing else had any meaning to me. I became obsessed.

I did not realise then that the desire to *escape* my pain and misery was the very thing that was giving life to it. In resisting the present appearance of what I felt to be suffering, that very suffering was being maintained and strengthened. In fighting lack, I was creating lack.

*That which is resisted is given power.* This seems to be a universal law.

Eventually, after months and months of intense meditation and self-enquiry, of questioning my thoughts and attempting to see through the ego, of mind-blowing spiritual experiences and states of deep bliss, I finally came to believe that I was in the state spoken of by the spiritual masters as 'enlightenment'. I believed that enlightenment was a state which only a lucky few throughout the ages had ever reached, and that I, through my efforts, had finally done it.

However, what I didn't realise then, was that the belief that I was enlightened was ultimately just that: *another belief*. A truly enlightened person (and I realise now that there is no such thing) would never for one moment claim to be enlightened, as the belief 'I am enlightened, others are not' is just another way to separate human beings from each other, another act of violence, another way to maintain the very ego which is supposed to be ended in enlightenment.

The belief in personal enlightenment is just another way to maintain a strong sense of self: how very un-enlightened!

I came to see that 'enlightenment' is not a state reserved for the lucky few, attained only by those who have been on the spiritual path for years, and who have carried out all the relevant practices and rituals. It is instead our natural condition, available to all of us, all of the time, and so no effort (or lack of it) is required. Indeed, it is the very effort or non-effort to reach enlightenment which obscures the enlightenment that is always already present. It is our search for 'something more' which seems to obscure the utterly obvious: *the present moment, and everything that arises in it, is all there is.*

Don't believe this? Check - it's always now. Whatever happens, happens now. Is there ever a time when you cannot say 'it is now'? Can anything happen if it is not happening now? Even memory - the story of a past - is that not just a bundle of thoughts arising presently? All the seeking, is that not just a bundle of conditioning - memory and its projections into the future - appearing right now?



It is so obvious: what I was looking for all those years was not something that could ever be found, because it had never actually been lost. Indeed, it is not really an 'it' at all, not a thing amongst other things, but the very condition that allows the possibility of 'things' in the first place.

Enlightenment is where we always already are, and in searching for it, we apparently lose it. Unfortunately, almost everything we do throughout our lives is part of this search, because almost everything we do implies that our salvation lies in the future, that peace and happiness and freedom are things that can be attained by us at some future time.

These days, the search for enlightenment, for happiness outside the present happiness, for any sort of 'self-improvement' whatsoever, has simply fallen away. You see, what had gone right to the root of all my seeking and depression had been the sense that I was a separate person, someone *over here* who lacked something, and who was looking for something *over there*. It was the sense of being a separate individual that had been at the core of all my worldly suffering. When that sense turned out to be an illusion, an assumption and nothing more, when it was seen in utter clarity that there is only life, and nobody here separate from life, then the search crumbled to the ground – and something extraordinary was revealed right where I was standing. It had nothing to do with 'somebody becoming enlightened'; it had nothing to do with awakened people, with transformations of consciousness or energetic shifts or special spiritual experiences of any kind. It was in fact something so extraordinarily simple that I had overlooked it my entire life.

What is left? Is it still possible to live in this world when the desire for something beyond the ordinary has dissolved?

This book attempts to express this wordless seeing, that belongs to nobody and therefore is totally free.

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## NOTHING WRONG WITH SILENCE

*This is the unnameable mystery - yet we give it a name.*

Having named the unnameable mystery a thousand times over, and taken those names to be the reality, we then live according to that reality, forgetting that the names were arbitrary, and a product of the mind.

Then the names torture us. We are caught between the polarities, imprisoned by the dualistic opposites: good and evil, love and hate, right and wrong, rich and poor, ugly and beautiful, sacred and profane. This dualistic prison is of our own making, although it's not really a prison at all, because it doesn't exist outside of thought.

*We spend our lives trying to escape a prison that isn't really there.*

The mind is interested only in the opposites. It is not interested in the mystery, because the mystery cannot be an object of knowledge. Indeed, it is that from which objects of knowledge arise; it is the Source, the fertile void which gives birth to all life. Without it there is nothing.

Call it the Tao, call it God, call it spirit, call it consciousness, call it life, call it nothing at all or even deny its existence; even the denial of it is simply it denying itself. No proof is needed for it. Why? Because this moment *is*. You are here. It is now. That, and just that, is the ultimate reality. There is no need for belief.

*You don't need to believe in something if that something is staring you in the face.*

When this is seen, how quiet everything becomes! All mental noise dies away, and is recognised for what it is: a false reality, an illusion, nothing more.

*When the prison is seen through, so is the prisoner.*

Then you are no longer a person: not a man, not a woman, not English, not American, black, white, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, atheist, rich or poor, good or bad, happy or sad. You are not any of these things. You are not this, not that, not any object of consciousness. You are not the body, not the mind. Those feet are not yours, those hands, those legs. That face doesn't belong to you. That head is there, but you do not own it. No eyes, no tongue, no nose, no throat, no heart. No form. Before you are all of these things, *you are*. You are consciousness, awareness, an open space, a vastness in which the world is allowed to arise.

You are life itself, not an individual cut off from the whole. You are one with all things, and all things are manifestations of what you are. The illusion of individuality arises, yes, but it is seen that this too is a manifestation of the divine, and you are not *doing* it. It is not *personal*. And the manifestation need not be denied. No self-denial is necessary. Oneness is everything and includes everything, even the appearance of the separate individual, and you cannot get rid of an appearance! Who would get rid of an appearance? Another appearance? Remember, what you deny, you affirm. What you reject you give life to.

The apparent individual arises. *Let it be*. It is an illusion, after all, a construction of thought. You are the openness in which the construction arises. This is not clever wordplay but the actuality of things. If you wish, you can look for yourself right now. Meditate on it. Come back to present awareness (and this is true meditation). Is there anything solid there called 'self'? Is there any clear distinction between 'you' and 'not you'?

Can you really pinpoint the place where you end and the world begins? Where is the boundary?

Without referring to the past, can you know who you are? Without using thought, can you say who you are, really?

Ultimately it's futile, this attempt to name the unnameable, to describe that which is prior to all description, to put words to the wordless.

Really, there is nothing more to say. Silence is the only honest way to go. Once you reach this point all words are just noise. Noise to fill the silence which is prior to, and envelops, all noise. Why do we pay so much attention to the noise? What is wrong with silence?

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Silence.

*We reach the point of creation.*

Why is there anything at all?

Why isn't there *nothing*?

What is wrong with silence?

\*

The noise comes, anyway, but now we see it in a new way. It has no particular purpose, in the sense that it is equal to silence. Neither better nor worse, but it is undeniably there - so we honour it. We do not deny it.

Life then becomes a play, a game, a divine, purposeless dance, existing for no reason other than to be itself. Noise and silence are inseparable. Being and non-being are inseparable. Me and not-me are inseparable. Everything exists in divine union, not as fragments but as aspects of a whole, each part important, each part enabling every other part to be. Nothing is out of place, nothing is unwanted, nothing is disposable. Being and non-being are the two aspects of consciousness, the two faces of the divine.

Ah, but the words are just ripples on the surface. Plunge back into the silence. No words are needed. No words are really necessary.

Just the simple feeling of being is enough, the simplicity and aliveness of *this*. Just a simple relaxation into what you already are.

\*

There is only *this*. There is only ever *this*.

The sound of breathing. The hum of the computer. The creaking of the radiator. A tingling in the toes. Hands moving over keys. Words coming out. Breathing. A sense of deep ease, a sense of 'okayness' with the whole world as it arises and dissolves. This is *life*, damn it! Here! Right here!

Words do not even scratch the surface of things. Yet we spend our lives scratching on the surface, thinking that we have the answers. We do not realise that there are no answers, because there are no questions. There were never any questions, because this moment is always already perfect the way it is. Any question would take you away from the perfection, although every question is part of the perfection too.

Nothing is excluded. Not even exclusion itself.

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## THE DIVINE PARADOX

*"I am not here."*

That is a common pointer used in nonduality teachings. But what does it really mean?

Well, what do you see when you look over here, at what you call 'me'? You see a bag of flesh and bone which appears to move and act and speak in fairly predictable ways. You see this behaviour, and tell your story of Jeff Foster. That is your 'me'. That is me, to you.

But is there actually a 'me' over here to which you are referring? Is there a 'Jeff' in here that you are somehow recognising and putting a name to?

Over here, all I can find is an open space, filled with sights and sounds, smells, thoughts and feelings. But here's the great discovery – there is simply no 'me' to be found at the centre of it all, no 'me' in charge of things. There is nothing solid here, only an openness to the constantly shifting scenery of the world, and 'me' or 'I' or 'myself' is just a story appearing in this open space.

All I can find here, when I look afresh at life, is the rumble of traffic, the tweeting of birds, the beating of the heart, breathing happening, and the story of a person called Jeff Foster. And this story can be a wonderful story to tell, but it cannot even *begin* to capture what I really am.

\*

Now, when you look over here at this bag of flesh and bone and its associated behaviours, and when you address it as 'Jeff', there is a response here, because that seems to be the appropriate thing to do. Not to respond would be socially unacceptable, and this bag of flesh and bone might then be cast into the loony bin, or at least heavily medicated.

Yet, one can't help wondering that perhaps it is dishonest to answer to a name, to identify who I am with who the world says I am. Because I certainly do not experience myself as a person, as an individual, as something separate from the world. No, if I am anything, I am this open space in which the whole world appears, and indeed I am not *separate* from the world which appears. If I am anything, I am what is happening, right here, right now, in this moment. If I am anything, I am *this, this and this*. That is the true meaning of nonduality. And it's what the Buddha meant when he said:

“Suffering alone exists, but none who suffer;  
the deed there is, but no doer thereof;  
Nirvana there is, but no one seeking it;  
the Path there is, but none who travel it.”

'Jeff' does not even begin to capture it. 'Jeff' is a relic from the past, part of a narrative that everybody seems to spin for themselves and by themselves. Indeed, there appears to be as many 'Jeffs' as there are people who know him!

This is not to deny that there is an idea here of a 'Jeff' floating about in awareness, as thought. But that is all there is, over here. *There is no Jeff having thoughts of 'Jeff' – that's the illusion. There is only the thought of 'Jeff' here, only the narrative floating through.*

It all happens for nobody, it all arises in this open space, in the vastness that holds everything, lovingly, unconditionally, in the clarity that allows everything to be. And there is simply no 'Jeff' outside of the vastness, which is to say, there is no 'Jeff' at all. I simply do not exist. 'I' am not here.

*No self, no problem*, as an old Zen monk once said.

\*

And yet, and yet... to all intents and purposes, I *do* exist. In the eyes of the world, anyway, there most definitely is a Jeff Foster – he has a birth certificate and a National Insurance number and

everything! To function in the world, a basic *assumption* seems to be necessary: that there is an individual here, a person. But it is an assumption, an idea, nothing more; it has no deeper reality.

With that realisation, the entire world self-liberates. Freed from the stranglehold of thought, freed from the burden of 'me and my problems', there is a great ease which permeates everything. Freed from goals and meanings, every moment is a goal in itself, everything is intrinsically meaningful, because every moment is all there is, or ever was. Set free from self-consciousness, anything is possible: there is no authority, there are no rules, and whatever happens just happens.

However, that doesn't mean you go round beating up old ladies. No, when it is seen that there is no separate self, it is also seen that there are no separate 'others' either. No others separate from yourself, at any rate. So this is the end of violence, the end of me-versus-you.

Beyond that me-versus-you illusion, there is such intimacy, such unconditional love and acceptance, that the idea of beating up old women, or anyone else for that matter, simply falls away. That old woman is myself, and I don't find myself beating her up. I find myself helping her across the road. The paradox: there are no others, and yet there is such love for others, such spaciousness to allow them to be exactly as they are.

Beyond the sense of separation, there *still* may be pain, anger and sadness. Yet a funny thing happens: pain, anger and sadness are no longer owned by anyone. They are no longer claimed by a seeker hungry for an identity. We could say that they still happen, but because they now happen for *nobody* instead of *somebody*, they simply don't *matter* anymore (since there's nobody there to whom they could possibly matter!) There's pain, anger and sadness, but since there is nobody there at war with experience, these sensations just dissolve of their own accord, in their own time, as they always have done. There's pain, anger and sadness, but there's no *problem* whatsoever, and therefore no desire to be 'free from suffering'.

Everything being talked about here is *already* the case, for all of us, and yes, that includes you, of course.

Already, there is freedom. Already, there is nobody in control. Already, things simply arise of their own accord.

*Look:*

The heart beats, and you are not *doing* the beating.

Breathing happens, and you are not *doing* the breathing.

Sounds in the room happen, and you are not *making* them happen.

Pain arises, and you are not causing it. Joy happens, and you have no choice. The sun rises and sets, flowers grow, wither and die, seasons change in the blink of an eye, and you are not in charge of this astonishing dream world.

The play of opposites plays itself out, and there is an undetectable silence that continuously embraces it all, allowing everything to arise exactly as it does.

The entire world arises in this open space, in this vastness which is utterly free from separateness and solidity, but which embraces separateness and solidity the way a mother embraces her newborn baby.

The secret is there in your heart beating, in your breathing, in the sights and sounds and smells manifesting themselves exactly where you are, right now.

*The secret is here. Do you see?*

\*

This cannot be understood intellectually. But somewhere beyond the words, there can be a resonance, a recognition, and that is the place to which these words are pointing right now, a place that has no location - which is to say, it is nowhere, and *everywhere*. It's there in your heartbeat. It's there in the breathing. It's there in the sensations in your body and the space around those sensations. It's there in your thoughts and the gaps between them, and in the sights and sounds and smells in the room.

Yes, all life asks of you is that you *see* it for what it is.

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## JUST A THOUGHT

"There are no steps to self-realization."

- Nisargadatta Maharaj

No wonder the search fails. *Being what you already are* has nothing to do with time, with effort, with *somebody* doing *something* to get *somewhere*.

It has nothing to do with understanding.

Nothing to do with process, nothing to do with praxis.

Nothing to do with lack of process or praxis.

It is not about seeing anything new, or getting rid of anything old.

It is not something the mind could ever grasp. Nor does the mind need to give up its grasping.

It is nothing personal, nor does it have anything to do with the 'impersonal'.

It cannot be expressed using concepts. Nor will it ever be expressed in the absence of concepts.

It is not about words. Not even these words.

It is not about getting anywhere.

It has nothing to do with any kind of future achievement.

It is not about following a path: there is no path, although there may be the *idea* of a path.

It is not about reaching some higher state: there are no higher states, although there may be *concepts* about higher states.

It is not about becoming something special and rare and unique, although beliefs about that may arise too.

It is certainly not about 'putting an end to the I'. Only an 'I' would want that.

It is most definitely not about 'becoming more present' – presence was never lost in the first place.

It is not about waiting for an event called liberation - that would require time, and a 'me' who would eventually become liberated.

It has nothing to do with going 'beyond' anything – there is nothing to go beyond, and nobody who could go beyond even if they wanted to.

It is not about enlightenment. There is no such thing as personal enlightenment.

It is not about awakening. There is no such thing as an awakened person.

It is not about enlightened individuals passing on their understanding to non-enlightened individuals. That's a good story, and a compelling one, but it's just a story, and has no deeper reality.

It is not something that could be of any use to anyone.

It is not something that anyone would ever want.

But no matter – the 'me' who would want this is just a thought anyway.

Just a thought.

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## ON LOVE AND ALONENESS

“Bind me like a seal upon thine heart:  
love is as strong as death.”

- *Song of Solomon 8:6*

I am alone in the garden. The sun is rising. A little robin tugs at a worm in the grass.

In true love, there is no object of desire, affection and tenderness, for the beloved has collapsed into the lover. The object has collapsed into the subject, and there is only love. Only love, and nobody to be aware of it, nobody to know it and nobody to deny it. Only love, both radically alone, and intimately connected to all things.

A subject and an object can never be in love. They are forever divided from each other, split from each other. They can only gaze longingly into each other's eyes across an unbridgeable divide, with the fervent hope that one day, perhaps one day, love will bridge the chasm, and the isolation of multiplicity and fragmentation will give way to the joy of intimate companionship, togetherness, and unity.

But no, love cannot and will not bridge the gap, for the gap is inherent in the subject-object split. Indeed, the gap *is* the subject-object split, and nothing can fill a gap which is so deeply engrained into the very foundations of our experience. No, love cannot bridge the gap, because a subject and an object, a lover and the beloved, are inherently, fundamentally separate. It is unlikely that they will ever truly meet as people, as human beings.

True love is the death of this terrible divide, and with it, the ending of all division between two people. This will never be achieved through effort. The very effort to end the division strengthens the division, gives power to the division. *This is because the division is not there.* It has never been there, and it will never be there. The division is an illusion, and when you fight an illusion you are bound to lose.

Lovers can never meet through effort, although they may die trying.

\*

So, our lovers continue to gaze longingly at each other across this unbridgeable divide, a divide that, in their innocence, they have created for themselves. How to help them? Any effort they make to come together will pull them more strongly apart. Are they doomed to live and die like this? Is there a way out?

Yes there is, but it involves death. Not physical death, but death of the ego, death of everything that separates, death of everything that fragments, death of everything that divides, death of



everything that isolates, death of everything that has been carried over from the past, death of everything that projects into a future. *Death of the idea of love itself.* Finally, it will involve death of the beloved, death of the lover. Death of you and me, and with it, death of all that comes between us. A descent into pure nothingness, a plunge into the unknown.

He who plunges in this way may taste it, the sweet and simple joy of radical aloneness that is true love. Look! The robin *tweet-tweets* as he hops over the dew-soaked grass, and the morning sun begins to warm and wake the slumbering creatures in this Garden of Eden that we have named *Earth*, and nowhere can I find isolation, loneliness, separation, because all things are in all things, and everywhere is *mother*, everywhere is home.

And I smile to myself with the realisation of the utterly, utterly obvious. I have not found you, but I have recognised something that has eluded me for a lifetime: *You are not out there, but in here. You are part of the experiencing structure I take to be myself.* So I do not love you, for there is no 'me' to love and no 'you' to be loved. No, I do not love you, for you are *an integral part of that which loves.*

\*

The great search ends here, now, in this moment. There is only love, and you are that - you are love itself. You are what I feel now, you are the thoughts bubbling up from nowhere and dissolving into nothingness, you are that robin over there, and the fresh dew on the morning grass, and the sun in all its radiance, and we are eternally, timelessly bound in this way, you and me, together with all things. Except there is no 'me', no 'you', and no 'things'. So we will never be apart - no, we cannot be apart, not now, not ever.

*So, this morning, I am alone in the garden, and you are here with me to see it all.*

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