

# *Out Beyond Ideas*

*John Astin*

© 2008

*His disciples said unto to Him: "When will the Kingdom come?"  
And Jesus said: "It does not come by expecting it. It will not be a  
matter of saying, 'See, it is here!' or, 'Look, it is there!'. Rather,  
the Kingdom of the Father is spread over the earth and men do  
not see it."*

*-- The Gospel of Thomas -*

*You can't maintain this. Try as hard as you may, (which you probably have!), you are not capable of maintaining or sustaining the experience called being awake, the experience of waking up to what you are. But you don't need to maintain it. God, Truth, Presence, Awakeness, Love, Life - call it what you will - It creates and sustains itself. It doesn't need you. It IS you.*

\*\*\*

*We overlook the miracle that lies before us for the simple reason that we keep looking for it somewhere else, searching for satisfaction in some other moment, hoping to God in some other experience.*

\*\*\*

*God - the Limitless, Absolute, Source of all life - is simply too big to fit into the little box called "mind," too vast to fit into the narrow confines of belief or ideology.*

*Nothing can contain the uncontainable. And that is what you are, this that cannot be contained, that cannot be defined, that cannot be known, a language without translation.*

\*\*\*

*The life that you are streams forth from some unknown place. It has no end, no border, a boundless energy that asks for nothing.*

\*\*\*

*Maybe there's a sense of being a self, a feeling of being something or someone who is separate? And then, a moment later, the self-sense suddenly falls away. What is knowing both self and not self?*

*The mind-made “me” seeks fulfillment in everything it encounters. The Self finds fulfillment in everything it encounters.*

\*\*\*

*What is it that grasps, and then lets go of grasping? It is this permanence that is forever changing, the flame of this truth that dances and flickers a thousand different ways and yet is always only burning.*

\*\*\*

*There is no one here, no me... and yet, something is drinking in this moment, savoring what is... What is that?*

*I am the silence, the silence of wanting nothing, the silence of being nothing, the silence of knowing nothing. I am the silence, the silence of loving everything, the silence of being everything.*

\*\*\*

*If we're lucky enough, at a certain point, the mind will come to the stark realization that it is simply too limited and narrow, too small to ever understand, fathom, or contain the wildfire of Life blazing across the heavens. What we are and what God is, is simply too unpredictable and wild, too vast and free to ever be known.*

*And yet, something is known, isn't it? There is this undeniable sense of knowing, the sense that something is happening even if we know not what it is. The mind may try again and again to wrap its arms around this, but eventually the realization will dawn that no name, no definition, no explanation for what is happening will ever suffice. Yes, something is known, but it is a knowing that shatters all knowing.*

*When the Heart looks,  
the eyes no longer see  
difference or distinction.  
Beauty has disappeared  
and now, there is only Beauty -  
a wind howling through the trees,  
the dust that decorates my window sill,  
the temple bells ringing,  
the silly little thought clouds  
dancing through the vast and empty sky -  
it has all become the same,  
One Breath breathing all things.  
everything these eyes fall upon whispers,  
“Here I am.”*

*Thought is not the enemy. It is simply part of the symphony of sounds that is life, no more significant or less beautiful than any other sound that is heard.*

\*\*\*

*How could we ever point to the Truth when the Truth is everywhere and everything?*

\*\*\*

*Maybe there's a sense of being a self, a feeling of being something or someone who is separate? And then, a moment later, the self-sense suddenly falls away. What is knowing both self and not self?*



*The particular constellation of thoughts, images, sensations, and feelings that tell you who and what you are - where are these all now? A thought arises: "This is who I am." A feeling appears and mind says, "Yes, this is what I am"... But where are all these thoughts and feelings now? Gone, like everything else that is so fleeting, vanished like every other moment that has ever appeared and then disappeared. The "you" that you think you are is but a memory, a moment, an experience that is no longer. What you are is ever-changing, the movement of Life, never fixed, always fluid, this ever-present freshness...*

\*\*\*

*Ironically, it is the effort to become free that creates the sense that there is a someone who is bound. In reality, there is no prison, only imagined prisoners, hoping and praying for some escape. There is no cage to flee from, only a belief in a separate someone who could ever find relief. And though we imagine some escape, where could we ever go but here, the only place there ever is...*

*Problems only exist in what was or what might be. In other words, they exist in time and time lives only in memory and imagination. Where is what happened yesterday? Where is what happened this morning or an instant ago? Gone, all of them. And the future? A dream that will never be... Right now, before the mind creates the appearance of time, is it possible for a problem to exist? Without time, can anything ever be wrong? Every experience the mind has ever judged as wrong or in need of repair - where are they all now? Gone, like everything else. So liberating isn't it? This now that is no longer, this freshness that is so free.*

\*\*\*

*Ironically, it is the effort to become free that creates the sense that there is a "someone" who is bound. In reality, there is no prison, only imagined prisoners, hoping and praying for some escape. There is no cage to flee from, only a belief in a separate someone who could ever find relief. And though we imagine some escape, where could we ever go but here, the only place there ever is...*

*Thoughts - whether about things or selves - don't actually refer to anything solid but simply to more thoughts. What we call "I" is nothing more than mind, commenting upon itself.*

\*\*\*

*Sometimes what's happening is an allowing of what is. At other times, what's happening is a resistance to what is. What those two movements - both the acceptance and the struggle - are happening within is Love Itself, an openness and allowing that has no opposite for everything that happens - both the pleasant and the unpleasant, the wanted and the unwanted, is allowed, is it not?*

*That which allows this moment to arise is Love. And that is what you are, the space that allows the world to be, the space that is the world.*

*Here is a simple definition of ego - it is that movement of mind that would take credit or blame for what is.*

\*\*\*

*Every love song we hear, is the voice of God, Life's love affair with Life, Love's longing for it Self.*

\*\*\*

*God is Life, the very Life that is looking out from my eyes right now, the very Life that is my eyes and everything these eyes behold.*

*Simply look, not in the realm of your ideas but in your direct experience - can you find any line of division, anything that actually separates one thing from another? Can you find something that divides this from that, a boundary between inside and outside, between here and there? Is there a line between self and other, between you and the world? Where is it?*

\*\*\*

*Where is the line between you and what you crave, between you and what you despise? Can you find something separating line what is seen from that which sees, a boundary between the sound of thought and the mysterious silence it flows out of, between that which moves and the stillness it moves within? Is there a line between the clouds and sky, between land and sea? Can you find a boundary between what appeared a moment ago and what is here now, a line that separates birth from death, that divides what is from what will be?*

*I'll let you in on a little secret... What's happening right now is everything you ever wanted and all there could ever be.*

\*\*\*

*It is not possible to speak about the Ultimate. And yet, every attempt to express what God is, is God, the indescribable contained in every description...*

\*\*\*

*Something is here, welcoming everything the mind wishes were not.*

*That which sees this moment loves this moment, without condition. Just look, and you will see that the looking is not capable of rejecting what is seen. That which sees this moment is this moment, the seer and the seen one thing, the play of lover and beloved.*

\*\*\*

*That which was realized a moment ago is now gone, is it not? It has vanished like everything else that once was. Awakening is not a memory but always, only now.*

\*\*\*

*Fear lives in the future. And yet, there can be no future. Which is why there is quite literally, nothing to fear.*

*Mind prowls the world in search of some object it desperately hopes will satisfy the ache and the hunger. And yet, nothing will. But maybe mind wants something else? Maybe it simply wants to stop looking anywhere and just sink back into its Source, dissolve into the dark and empty Silence it has always been living inside of. That is the invitation here - to let mind fall back into what it came from. To let it die into the nothingness that gave it birth for there it will find everything it ever searched for.*

\*\*\*

*If we are paying attention, we will begin to notice all the things we do, all the ways we are that create suffering. We will feel the pain of turning away from this moment. We will feel the suffering inherent in always looking toward the future for the next experience. We will know the suffering of holding onto to what by nature is impermanent and fleeting, the pain of trying to retrieve a past that is forever gone. And we will stop, not because we've read enough books on non-duality or done enough spiritual practices, but simply because to stop is the most natural thing to do, the only thing that makes sense.*



*When attention begins to lose its fascination with the story called self, what remains is the simple wonder of this - a crack in the sidewalk, the paper clip on my desk, a speck of dust on the floor, the rush of wind through the trees. Everything is ablaze with this quiet, heart wrenching beauty, simply because it is.*

\*\*\*

*Fear, joy, frustration, contentment, acceptance, judgment, a busy mind, a still mind - these states are not happening to you. They are, like everything else that is experienced, simply expressions of what You are.*

\*\*\*

*For the next few moments, just allow yourself to sit, not in order to obtain or acquire or see something, not so that you can have a particular insight, experience or realization, but simply to sit for no other reason than to express what is.*

*This grasping after pleasure, the search for happiness, the effort to escape all the suffering - none of it is yours. Neither the bondage nor the freedom from it belongs to you. You are not the owner of anything. Everything belongs to Life. Everything is the expression of Life, the mysterious Source that gives rise to everything you think of as "you." Even the sense that this is yours is not yours.*

\*\*\*

*Yes, there is something - call it awareness - that silently registers the sound of the bird or the traffic outside or the colors and patterns of light that appear before its ever-watchful gaze. But what happens when the silent awareness becomes interested and curious about the sights and sounds that are appearing within it? What happens when the still and unmoving witness becomes curious about that which it is witnessing? There is the sense here that the mystery that is awake (our true nature) has this natural interest and curiosity about everything. In its more active aspect or dimension, the mystery seems to live in a state of child-like wonder and innocence, a kind of quiet fascination, even awe, in the face of the utter miracle that is everything.*

*I met God on the road today. She asked me if I knew where She might find God. I didn't know what to say.*

\*\*\*

*All the strategies we employ to try and “get beyond” the self tend to reinforce the idea that there is in fact something there to get rid of, something to get beyond and someone who could actually do that. In the end, we come to realize that all the effort to transcend the self is, ironically, a perfect reflection of our obsession with self! But as the realization dawns that no such separate, independent entity actually exists, the struggle to get past it begins to fall away of its own accord. For once it is has been seen that the self we imagined we were holding onto isn't actually there, the motivation to try and let that phantom go simply dies.*

\*\*\*

*The seeker's folly is that he believes he is somehow capable of refusing the very Source that sustains him.*

*Awareness gives rise to the sense that there is a “me.” The question is, is that me actually there? Or is there just the sense that it is?*

\*\*\*

*A moment of awakening, a moment of slumber - who has these experiences?*

\*\*\*

*What do you imagine yourself to be - a man, a woman, a mother, father, friend? A seeker of Truth, a finder of Truth? Someone who hasn't seen who they are or someone who has? A person in bondage, or one who is now liberated? A separate self, or one who has seen through the illusion called self? One who still sleeps or one who is now awakened? These are all just images, all the play of mind imagining it is something (or maybe even nothing)!*

*At the center of it all, there is simply nothing - nothing to negotiate with what is, nothing to seek or refuse what is, nothing to hold on to or let go of what is, nothing to fear or embrace what is. There is simply Life, with nothing at the center, a nothing that is everything.*

\*\*\*

*We seek to love what is here but what is here is already loved, is it not? What is here is already accepted, already welcomed, without question or reason. This is the movement of life, the dance of nothing loving everything.*

\*\*\*

*All is quiet now. The sun of certainty has set. Only night remains, the dark and haunting silence that swallows mind and with it, what we call "the world."*

*Seeing is already occurring, regardless of whether what is being seen is something desired or dreaded. Seeing is happening and it is happening this very instant, long before you ever look to see if it is happening. See?*

\*\*\*

*Has there ever been a single experience or thought or feeling that awareness has rejected?*

\*\*\*

*The bodymind is a master magician. It can conjure up just about any experience. It can make happiness or sadness, hope or despair. It can make plans, make friends, make meaning. It can make love and war. It can dance and sing, laugh and cry, climb mountains, read books, learn calculus, or fly to the moon. It can create the sense that there is a self. It can generate millions of thoughts about that self. It can make us believe that a self actually exists. But it can never, ever make a self, hard as it may try.*

*What is meditation? Meditation is life, attention moving in and out of itself, the Mystery gazing upon its myriad forms.*

\*\*\*

*It's not possible to move away from the only Thing there is.*

\*\*\*

*It's easy to let go, every moment vanishing without effort...*

*It's not you who is searching. It is Life. It's not you who stops the search. It is Life.*

\*\*\*

*Why does it matter where I look, or how long my gaze remains there when everything I behold is That, this unspeakable Mystery that lives as everything?*

\*\*\*

*Whatever we turn toward is God. Whatever we turn away from is that same One. Check Mate!*



*Stillness is not the absence of movement. It is simply the end of looking for anything else.*

\*\*\*

*Though we travel the inner and outer worlds in search of that elusive “something else,” there will never be a “something else.” There will always be only this.*

\*\*\*

*What would become of the search if there were no effort to end it? What would happen to the experience we call “seeking” if all the spiritual manipulations and strategies to try and make it disappear were to cease? After all, who says the seeking should stop anyway? Isn’t it only our spiritual conditioning that says the searching and the wanting is the dreaded enemy of liberation that must be vanquished?*

*Not effort or  
the absence of effort,  
neither choice nor  
the impossibility of choice,  
neither self nor not self,  
neither nothing nor something,  
neither emptiness nor form,  
neither unborn nor born,  
the third thing.*

*The Awake-Presence in which all experiences, all phenomena appear and disappear - welcomes it all. It is a boundless and indiscriminate love, a love that welcomes the moments of searching and the moments when searching falls away.*

\*\*\*

*The atheist is God, insisting that God does not exist.*

\*\*\*

*All concepts divide, splitting the world into two though never really.*

*The very idea that, “I must surrender” or “I must stop seeking” is simply more of the same old story of seeking and suffering, the idea that something is wrong with what is, the belief that something other than what is happening needs to happen. It is the story of incompleteness, the story of not enough that says, “The state I am in now is one of seeking and I must get to a different, more preferable state, namely not seeking.” But what if we took a different tact? What if we simply made no effort to get rid of effort? Is it possible that the only reason there is the sense of being imprisoned in “doing,” the feeling that we are somehow “caught” in making effort is that we are trying to escape it? What if we ceased to turn doing or not doing, seeking or not seeking, into a problem that must be solved? Where would that leave us?*

\*\*\*

*Beyond all stories of freedom and bondage, who are you?*

## MOVING IN AND OUT

For years, I struggled to keep contact with awareness, remain in a state of mindfulness or presence. The experience would go something like this - whether in a meditation or simply daily life, I would experience I kind of oscillation between being in touch with that which witnesses the movement of mind - let's call it mindfulness or awareness - and then at some point seconds or minutes later, being caught in whatever was moving or appearing (i.e., thought, feeling, memory, fantasy). Then, of course, I would try, sometimes struggle, to re-connect with the witnessing awareness, re-connect with that which watches the mind but is not caught in it.

The sense, whenever I was successful at re-contacting the witnessing presence was one of coming home again. Conversely, whenever there was the experience of re-immersion in some mental story, daydream or fantasy, the feeling was one of being lost, a powerful, often painful sense of having lost touch with something, which would in turn lead to some effort to recapture the sense of being home, some strategy to reestablish contact with mindfulness/awareness. Sound at all familiar? It is one version of the old spiritual seeker's dance, the dance of "finding it, then losing it, then trying to find it again" ... It is pure suffering though that was not realized for a long, long time...

Then one day, the question arose: “There is this sense of having returned home. But, what *is* it that is experiencing this sense? What *is* it that is actually coming back? What is it that is returning to presence? It *feels* like there is something there that is moving back and forth, something that is going in and out, moving from presence or awareness to mind or thought and then (hopefully!) back again to presence and the feeling of ‘home.’ But what is this that is apparently moving?”

Ever since I could remember, in all the years of seeking to find this presence and then once found not lose it (or at least get back to it once it had been lost), there was the belief and sense that it was of course, “I” who was moving back and forth. The assumption (and corresponding feeling) was that it was “I” who was the one who was coming home, just as it was “I” who was the one getting lost in thought, immersed in the story of mind. “I” was the one oscillating between feelings of freedom and bondage, remembrance and forgetfulness, awareness and mind...

And then in the immediate wake of that question, it was seen so clearly. **There was no one, no “I” who was moving back and forth, no “I” who was coming home (or leaving home).** There was either just the sense of being home, the sense of something coming back to itself, awakesness or presence

returning to know itself, again. Or, there was simply a different sense, a movement of involvement in whatever was appearing - a thought, a feeling, a sensation, an image, a perception. And if there was the sense of having lost something in that involvement, well then there was just the sense of being lost, the sense of being involved or immersed. But there was no one there, no person, no "I" who had moved into that experience of "being lost" or immersed. There was simply Being, being lost, Being, being involved, Being, being home. In short, there was simply what is, Life moving as being awake and resting as the witnessing presence and then Life moving as involvement in the activity of mind. And all the while, I thought there was someone there, someone at the center of all the apparent movement back and forth, there simply was no such one, nothing at the center of it all, nothing...

And so it is seen that "coming home to presence" or "being lost and seemingly away from home, away from presence," are not really different. For when there is no effort to move away from "being immersed," no story that being immersed is a problem that "I" must overcome, a prison that "I" must escape from, there is simply Being, simply what's happening. In other words, when there is no effort to escape, when it is seen that there is no one to escape, there really is no bondage. There is only awakensness, naturally present and no effort to return to it. All there is, is what is. If there is the sense of being home,

resting in presence, then that is what is. If there is the sense of being involved in or even lost in the movement of mind, then that is what is. Something (really nothing) is present with it all, a Mystery that is tasting both freedom and bondage but is neither and both. You are that Mystery, a Mystery that is never moving in or out of anything but It Self.



*This that is Awake sees beyond the mind's preferences. It recognizes that every moment is a gift, every moment the miracle, not just the ones that match our particular preferences and desires.*

*Why do we not see this? Why do we fail to behold the miracle that lies before us? For the simple reason that we keep looking for it somewhere else.*

\*\*\*

*The realization that all is well is the birth of true love, a love that asks for nothing, that needs nothing, that knows nothing, a love that has no preferences or viewpoints, even as it welcomes them all.*

*Does it take effort or no effort to be aware?*

\*\*\*

*Is it possible to not experience what is being experienced?*

\*\*\*

*When you tell me about your "self," who is it that is speaking?*

*When did this moment begin?*

\*\*\*

*Where is the path to here?*

\*\*\*

*Where does self end and the world begin?*

## CHOICE OR NO CHOICE?

We seek security in our conceptual viewpoints. We want to know, “is there free will or not? Can I choose to be awake or is it choiceless? Should I do spiritual practices or are they unnecessary? Is awakening sudden or gradual?” But the Truth will have none of this, for It lies beyond all concepts, beyond all mental opposites, even as it holds them all in Its infinite embrace.

The mind hears spiritual teachings and imagines they must either be statements of truth or not. But in actuality, *no* teaching can be a statement of truth for it is not possible to speak about the truth, not possible to describe what is by nature indescribable. Words and concepts are inherently limited and dualistic, which is why when they are being used to point to something beyond them, they will invariably end up contradicting themselves.

Adyashanti is fond of saying that rather than being coherent statements of truth, spiritual teachings are really just strategies, strategies that if heard the right way can help catalyze a recognition of the non-conceptual reality the words are pointing to. For example, in non-dual circles, we frequently hear the statement that “there’s nothing you can do to awaken.” But the whole notion that there’s nothing we can do,

while true in some respects, is also not true, for to look and recognize that awareness is already present, to see that there is nothing we need to do to make awareness shine because it is already shining, is itself a kind of doing, is it not? So, the idea that there's "nothing we can do," rather than being a statement of the way things are in some absolute sense, is really just a tool, a strategy. And if the words "there's nothing you can do" resonate, there may be a surrendering or dropping of effort, a giving up of trying to make anything in particular happen, a relaxing of all the strategies we engage in to try and realize who and what we are. And in that giving up, Reality might just wake up and realize Itself as That which lies beyond all dualistic notions of doing or not-doing, making effort or not making effort, practicing or not practicing....

We can also see this in the familiar spiritual teaching that "all is one." Even *that* teaching is not really an absolute statement of the way things are because clearly Life can move as experiences of oneness as well as experiences of separation and multiplicity. The closer pointer might be to say that things are neither one, *nor* two. The ocean and its waves, the sun and its rays, the tree and its branches - neither one, nor two...

While on retreat several years ago, I was meditating and the sense I had was that it was all about choice. The insight in that moment was that I could choose to either be with what was

arising or to move away from it. And in that choice was a sense of profound freedom. Then, later on that same day, the opposite experience arose. What became clear in that moment was that there never had been a choice, that it was not possible to move away from experience because awareness was choicelessly embracing everything that arose. And in that experience of no choice, there was again the sense of great freedom.

So, which experience was true? Did freedom lie in choice or the impossibility of choice? Well, the answer is really neither and both. The truth is that experience is forever transcending our ideas about it, transcending any conclusions we might try to draw about what is happening. Why? Because our concepts and mental interpretations are inherently dualistic and experience is not. It is just experience. Which is why if you ever find yourself or someone else arguing over some conceptual or philosophical idea or viewpoint, rest assured that that person has landed smack dab in the middle of delusion, smack dab in the middle of the mind's ideas about the way things are... As the poet Rumi reminds us:

*“All theologies are like straws His Sun burns to dust  
Knowing takes you to the threshold, but not through the Door  
Nothing can teach you if you don't unlearn everything  
How learned I was, before Revelation made me dumb.”*

*Self is nothing more than a knot in the fabric of Life. Whether tightly wound or completely unraveled, it is all the garment of this Love.*

\*\*\*

*Though we seem convinced of the need to let go or become non-attached, when we actually look, it becomes apparent that holding on is not actually possible for we are powerless to keep what has arisen from passing away. While we may have become conditioned to believe that letting go is necessary, when we look at the actuality of our experience, it is clear that thoughts, feelings, and experiences are gone no sooner than they appear, the one you just had having fled and with it, any possibility of ever holding on.*

*If we take no steps to change or modify or move away from the sense that something is missing, than it will be seen that this seeming emptiness has always been full, the incompleteness, already complete.*

\*\*\*

*Birth... something happened and yet nothing really happened for God simply became Herself, Life giving birth to Life. Unchanged, in all the changing, at rest, even as it moves.*

\*\*\*

*When there is no resistance to the experience of “losing it,” then losing it becomes the impossibility of ever losing anything. When there is no resistance to the experience called “being separate,” then being separate is realized to be the absence of separation.*



## ONE LITTLE THOUGHT

One morning, I awoke to find myself struggling, looking for something, some answer, though I knew not what it was. Nothing was being asked of me in that early dawn, no pressures, no demands, no expectations. And yet, there was this nagging sense that something else was needed in that moment, the feeling that something was still missing...

Now, being the trained spiritual seeker that I was, as I lay there in bed, I got busy, trying to figure out how I might free myself from what was happening, seeking to find some way out of the experience of struggle and suffering that for some unknown reason was arising. I knew the drill - find the witness, the space of awareness that was inherently free of all seeking, all wanting, all struggling. But, it wasn't working. The seeking and the struggling continued. No matter what spiritual tricks of the trade I employed, seeking went on, unabated. *"How could this still be here,"* I thought? *"How, despite everything that is known, all those moments of seeing the truth that nothing has ever been missing, that there has never been anything to seek for the peace and freedom that has been sought is already here as this awake-awareness that I am... blah, blah, blah..."*

But then, in a moment of grace, something else revealed itself. It was suddenly seen that the entire experience of seeking was

being sustained by one simple belief, one idea that was holding the whole thing together: “This should not be here. Seeking should not be happening.” That was it, one little thought.

And the instant that was seen, the whole thing fell apart. Seeking unraveled itself, for it was so obvious that it was only the resistance to seeking, the very effort to become free of it, that was keeping it alive. For what is seeking when there is no resistance to it? What is resistance like when there is no resistance to it? What are fear, and anxiety, and insecurity when there is no idea that those experiences should be other than they are (or if such ideas are present, there is no idea that such ideas should somehow disappear)?

*We look for satisfaction in some other moment but there can be no other moment. This is our predicament, even though it isn't.*

\*\*\*

*What happens to the experiences called “suffering and separation” when there is no effort to liberate ourselves from them?*

\*\*\*

*Is the moment held together or forever falling apart? I can't really tell anymore.*

*The only thing that can ever be lost is an experience. You are not an experience. And you are every experience.*

\*\*\*

*This morning, it dawned on me as I was walking down the street, that this was the true walking meditation: to simply love the way "I" walk, to love the way "I" move, the way everything moves. To simply love this, the way it is...*

\*\*\*

*It is our resistance to seeking, the effort to become free of it, that sustains it. For what is seeking when there is no resistance to it? What is resistance like when there is no resistance to it? What are fear, and anxiety, and insecurity when there is no idea that those experiences should be other than they are?*

*“When I get this one question answered, there will be no more questions.”*

*“When this one desire is finally satisfied, there will be no more desires.”*

*“When at last, I have found what I’ve been searching for, there will be no more searching...” These are the cries of a hungry ghost, an emptiness that will never be satisfied because there is nothing there to fill.*

\*\*\*

*Mind keeps struggling, trying to find an answer to a question that doesn't exist, seeking to chart a course to a land that is nowhere to be found, trying to shape what is ultimately without structure or form.*

*Mind is constantly drawing conclusions about everything - conclusions about who we are, and what God is - conclusions about what is happening or what just happened - conclusions about what this all means and how it should be.*

*But what is this moment like when we aren't concluding anything about it? Who are you and what is God when there are no conclusions? What is this, before it has been decided what it is? Before experience has been either formed or fixed, what is it, really?*

\*\*\*

*This is not about effort or the relinquishing of effort, choice or the impossibility of choice, self or the absence of self. This is about something else...*

*When all efforts  
to make something else  
arise or happen,*

*when all strategies  
to uncover or  
understand,*

*when all techniques  
to train the mind  
or the “me”  
have finally  
exhausted  
themselves,*

*it is seen that  
no effort was  
ever required  
to Be,  
though Being  
never refused  
a single effort...*

*An impulse arises to give voice to the mystery of this... And yet nothing comes - no words, no thoughts, no images - only this unspeakable Love that is the death of everything the mind imagines it might be.*

\*\*\*

*Nisargadatta put it so beautifully, "The only true statement the mind can ever make is, 'I don't know.'"*

*That which knows it does not know is love.*

\*\*\*

*That which experiences me is not me and yet it is also me...*



*To say anything about God is to utter a falsehood for the Ultimate Truth can never be spoken. It is beyond description, beyond all conceptual categories and distinctions.*

\*\*\*

*The thought that you are separate from God is God. The sense that you are apart from God is God. Any more questions?*

\*\*\*

*Nothing is certain anymore for certainty lives only in thought.... This is the great unraveling of everything that was ever known, everything the mind ever imagined to be true... And yet, in the midst of all this uncertainty, something is certainly here, something that cannot be denied for what but this something could ever deny it? What is this that is here, this that cannot be denied? It has no name, and yet it is every name, a love that is so empty it excludes nothing.*

\*\*\*

*The central problems and human conflicts we see evident in the world today flow out of a single conviction, the sense that what is - the experience that is appearing right now - is somehow lacking. For if the moment was experienced as truly enough, there would be no seeking after such things as recognition, power, prestige, or control. The very behaviors that have wreaked so much suffering and havoc - greed, avarice, bigotry, abuse, addiction - these all represent human beings efforts to fill some imagined void, prop up the self-image, make us feel more important or secure, or help us find greater happiness and fulfillment. This is the great irony, that the "problems" of the world are all rooted in the belief that there ever was a problem in the first place!*

\*\*\*

*Sometimes what is seen is desired, sometimes it is dreaded. But the seeing is constant.*

\*\*\*

*What if nothing needed to happen? What if nothing needed to change? What if nothing needed to be let go? Kind of stops you in your tracks, doesn't it...*

\*\*\*

*What is awake is perfect at being awake.*

*No wave has ever been apart from the ocean. Nothing that arises ever escapes the sea. There can be no returning to what we have always been.*

\*\*\*

*A thought arises: "This moment should be other than it is. Something else is needed to make what is here, better..." And from that one innocent thought, an entire world is born, a virtual reality of loss and lack and an imaginary character who will somehow find whatever it imagines has been lost. And all the while, the whole thing is made up, an unreal world, conjured out of thin air, held together by nothing more than the wisp of thought.*

*The One is not able to step outside of It Self in order to render some opinion or judgment. Everything that is seen is It Self.*

\*\*\*

*The One knows nothing for there is no-thing outside of it to be known, believes nothing because there is nothing to believe. And yet, it moves as all things known and all things believed, this Mystery that is everything, this Mystery you have always been.*

\*\*\*

*The mystery that is peering out from our eyes this very moment is the perfect lover we have been seeking, the boundless space of awareness that welcomes everything, an opening in which the world appears. This is the lover you have always sought, the perfect lover you have always been.*

*The search for freedom arises in freedom. The search for awareness arises in awareness. The search for being arises in being. The search for the present moment arises presently. The search for peace arises in peace. The search for God arises in God. The search for God is God. There is only God...*

\*\*\*

*The thinking mind is forever seeking to find a foothold, trying to claim some experience, some insight or understanding as either "it," or "not it." But whatever destination or conclusion it imagines it has arrived at is no longer. The moment, whether clung to or rejected, is already gone. It has now become something else, the next thing, the next turn in the river. There is no place to land, no place to find, and no one to find it. We cannot stop the rushing river nor can we ever step out of it. The river is what we have always been - stillness moving, emptiness dancing, silence, roaring.*

*Come rest here,  
here in this thought,  
this feeling, this moment  
of great sorrow or joy.  
Come rest, here in the sounds  
of the children laughing  
and the anguished cries  
of those who imagine  
they have lost their way.  
Come rest here,  
here in the cradle  
of a warm summer night,  
and the blistering cold  
of winter's dawn.  
Come rest in this  
for there is nowhere else  
to rest...*

*You are the embrace of everything, the vast sky-like nature of Mind that refuses no cloud, the empty Love that welcomes both sun and rain... Each moment is new, the past a dream already forgotten, already let go, already forgiven...*

\*\*\*

*Isn't it amazing, these little minds of ours that keep dreaming they have the capacity to either turn on the light of consciousness or keep it from shining? It's quite funny when you think about it, this belief that we are somehow clever or strong enough to resist the entire force of the Universe, this fantasy that we actually have the capacity to make God appear, or disappear.*



*The reality is that we have neither the power to make awakening happen nor the power to keep it from happening. It is only the arrogance of mind that would have us believe otherwise. All the little strategies we engage in to either resist or accept what is - they are like throwing feathers into a raging wind - we are simply no match for the force of this Love.*

\*\*\*

*To struggle to not be separate is to have the experience of being separate even though being separate is never actually possible...*

\*\*\*

*We long to be at rest and yet, we keep moving, struggling to arrive somewhere else, longing to see something else, to experience anything but what is here, insisting that life be other than it is, which it never can.*

*We are on the wrong side of this war. The fight with Reality is a battle we will never win. Maybe it's time we surrender then, give up and admit defeat, see there is no "where" we could ever go, and no "one" who could ever leave.*

\*\*\*

*Ironically, the moment something becomes ours - my joy, my friend, my God - we have the sense of being split off from it, perceiving it as an "object" that can be possessed. The great paradox is that it is actually the radically impersonal nature of everything - the fact that there is no self in any of it - that makes everything so "personal," personal in the sense of being experienced as unbearably close, unspeakably near, "ours" in the truest sense of that word. The reality is that Life can only ever be ours when "we" are no longer.*

*Our preferences are like dim candles that more and more are simply overwhelmed by another Light, overwhelmed by the sheer force of this Awakeness that loves what is without question or motive, that recognizes It Self as everything.*

*All the mind's arguments, all its protests and all its negotiations, melt like snow before the heat of this Sun, this Invisible Light that illumines everything, this Light that is everything...*

\*\*\*

*How many thoughts did you have today? A hundred? A thousand? Maybe a million? Who knows... But one thing is for sure - they're all gone now, aren't they? Every last one of them, vanished. The happy ones, the sad ones, all of them, poof!*

*And the thousands or millions of feelings and sensations? All of them gone as well. All that remains is the freshness of this, this that is appearing now, this that will soon vanish too, like everything else.*

*Perhaps this is what you have always wanted...*

\*\*\*

*Ironically, it is the effort to escape what is that creates the feeling of being bound by what is. And yet, there is no escape for no matter how hard we may try and run, there is only what is, only Reality at every turn.*

\*\*\*

*This is a demolition project, the total annihilation of everything the mind imagines is not God.*

\*\*\*

*Even the resistance to love is Love, the argument with God, God, and the struggle with life, Life...*

*The truth is that we cannot know what is coming next. And yet ironically, it is our efforts to control or predict the future (which is by its very nature not predictable) that actually creates the sense of insecurity we imagine such efforts will free us from. In other words, it is our struggle to be secure that creates the sense that we are not.*

\*\*\*

*Everything is ending and yet we try to make it stop, engaged in this hopeless battle to sustain what has already disappeared, struggling to control what has already slipped through our fingertips... But each ending is also a beginning, life creating, then destroying, then creating itself over and over and over, the dying and the being born, one indistinguishable movement.*

*Struggling to get beyond the sense of being a separate me never actually works because it is that very struggle with what is that gives rise to the sense of being a me in the first place!*

\*\*\*

*This is a path of failure, not success - the failure to control what is by nature uncontrollable, the inability to hold onto something that is already gone, the futility of stabilizing what is already stable, the impossibility of fixing what was never broken or finding what was never gone.*

\*\*\*

*We seek security in our conceptual viewpoints. We want to know, "is there free will or not? Can I choose to be awake or is it choiceless? Should I do spiritual practices or are they unnecessary? Is awakening sudden or gradual?" But the Truth will have none of this, for It lies beyond all concepts, beyond all mental opposites, even as it holds them all in Its infinite embrace.*

## WHO IS THE AUTHOR?

When the teaching is put forth that choice and free will are ultimately illusory, it is not surprising that our minds would take issue with this notion. After all, it sure *feels* like we are choosing to do x, y or z. No question that it appears as if it is we who are the one's pulling the strings, making the decisions, using our intention and will to move this way or that in life. But when you actually look into the whole question of choice, look to see who or what is making it, and where those choices come from, the picture gets very murky in a hurry.

For example, this morning, I had yoghurt, granola and toast for breakfast. Now, one could say that I made the choice to eat those things and not something else, say pancakes or eggs. But where did that choice actually come *from*? And for that matter, where has *any* choice we've ever made come from? The reading of these words (not to mention your reaction to them) - if that is a choice, from where did it arise? It certainly seems as if you were the one that decided that reading these words and not doing something else is how you wanted to spend your time, at least in this moment. But if you trace the decision back, if you follow the intention to do what you're doing right now back to its source, can you actually find that source? Is it possible to discern where or how the intention actually began? It may feel as if the choice or decision to do something was initiated by

you, that you are the author of the choices that you make. But is that actually the case? Can you find the source or beginning of that which was chosen or intended?

Take another apparent choice, like deciding to go for a run. Where did that idea or choice come from? Did you decide to have the thought or impulse that led you to go get some exercise? Can you tell me what the ultimate source was, the initiator or stimulus of your intention? You could answer with many things - maybe the thought or impetus came from your conditioning, from some idea that was learned from your family or society regarding what would be best for your body. Or maybe the impulse or desire came from your biology or genes themselves, arising from the body's natural instinct to take care of itself. But wherever or whatever its ultimate source, the question is, are you actually *consciously* choosing the impulses, thoughts and ideas that then manifest as the decisions and choices that are made? In other words, are you really the one in control? It may appear that way but is it actually the case? For if it is not ultimately possible to define or know where our choices come from, how can we say that we are the authors of those choices?

Interestingly, there is recent work in neuroscience that is also calling into question the deep seated assumption that we are the authors of the choices and decisions that are being made.



As one well-known neuroscientist puts it, summarizing his research, “The initiation of the freely voluntary act appears to begin in the brain unconsciously, **well before the person consciously knows he wants to act.**” The reference here is to experiments showing that before we are even consciously aware of an intention to do something (like lift our finger or press a button in a lab), something actually fires off in the brain in apparent anticipation of what we label as the beginning or initiation of the decision to act. Kind of amazing, isn’t it? The conclusion of many neuroscientists is that the feeling of volition or personal authorship and control of actions is actually something the brain creates, *after the fact*. It feels as if we are choosing to do things but that feeling or sense is being simulated by the mind. Thought arrives after the action arises and then claims ownership or authorship of that action (i.e. “I chose to do that...”).

While believing we are the author of our actions probably has some functional utility, the question is, is it actually true? For if we look for the source of our choices and intentions, it would appear that it is not actually possible in direct experience to find their origin. Thoughts, desires, beliefs, feelings, actions - while appearing to be chosen, arise spontaneously from we know not where, emerging like everything else from a Mystery the mind can never fathom...

*Relax.*  
*You cannot stop*  
*the wind from blowing,*  
*nor the rain from falling.*

*Relax.*  
*You cannot make*  
*the sun shine*  
*nor can you keep it*  
*from shining.*

*Relax.*  
*You are powerless*  
*to accept or reject*  
*this moment.*  
*It's too late for that*  
*for what is here*  
*is already here.*

*Relax.*  
*Nothing needs to happen.*  
*Your efforts to arrive*  
*somewhere else*  
*will not succeed*  
*for there is no escaping*  
*the only Thing*  
*there is.*

*Relax...*  
*Life cannot hurt you*  
*for you are Life.*

*What's so interesting is that the sense of separation is actually not separate! It makes no sense to the mind but the feeling of separation we seek to be free of is actually Life itself. Right in the middle of every sensation, right in the heart of every sense (including the sense of being separate) is one hundred percent aliveness, one hundred percent God. Funny, isn't it, that the very separate self-sense we've struggled so long to escape from turns out to be Life Itself. The separate self is none other than the undivided Self for there is only the Self, One Life, appearing as everything that is felt, everything that is touched, everything that is sensed...*

\*\*\*

*The limited is made of the unlimited, the born, sown from the seeds of the unborn, the realm of time made from the timeless, the world of illusion ushered forth from the depths of the Real, the personal, forged within the heart of the impersonal.*

*The future is simply not possible. Only in imagination does life ever happen there. And so too with the past - it is and will always remain an impossibility.. There is no life in what was. But, we could also say that like both past and future, the present is also not possible. For though the future will never be, it is also in a sense, all that is happening for what is here is never really here but continuously giving birth to something else, something new, something that was not here before.*

*This, just this that is appearing right now, is all there ever is, all there ever could be, and all that ever was needed. But “this” is not some static thing. It is the very dance of Life, so awake, so vital, so dynamic, a “now” that keeps exploding into what’s next, ever changing yet always the same.*

*If everything is the One, if everything is God or the Truth or the Tao (pick your favorite word to describe the Ultimate Reality), then the instant we seek God or Truth in some other state, some other experience or moment other than the one that is happening right now, we effectively split the world in two. We say, "Well, this isn't it and something else, some other state is." And that, right there, is the beginning, middle, and end of human suffering, the effort to move away from what is in the hopes that something else will bring us what we want, the mistaken belief that just this, as it is, could never be God.*

\*\*\*

*What if we simply took what was given, without asking more from it? No bigger, better, richer, more awakened, enlightened or whatever experiences, but just this, this that is here, right now, as it is?*

*Abandon yourself to worry  
and you will discover  
what has never known fear.  
Surrender yourself to insecurity  
and you will find  
what has always been safe.*

*Give yourself over to bondage  
and you will find  
what has always been liberated.  
Disappear into contraction  
and you will see  
what has never been closed.*

*Submit yourself to separation  
and you will find what remains  
forever undivided.*

*Mind tends to believe its translations and interpretations, even making religions out of them, all the while thinking such edifices of belief will somehow keep it safe from the insecurity and uncertainty that lurks just around the corner, the dark unknown, the fathomless, unborn mystery out of which mind and everything is born...*

\*\*\*

*We seek to be rid of desire which of course is just more desire; we think that thought is the problem, which is just more thought; we long to be free of seeking which is just more seeking, and on it goes, round and round we run, trying to escape the wheel of mind, trying to extricate ourselves from the wheel of suffering, all the while not realizing that the very moment we try and step off the wheel, we've actually climbed right back on it! Really, there is no spinning of the wheel... until we try to make it stop.*

*This, right now, as it is - this is the divine love that is sought, boundless Love appearing as this instant, this feeling, this sensation, this thought. All of it divine, even the moments that mind would tell us are not... So relax, you can never move closer nor ever stray from the only thing there is, this Ground out of which everything is arising, moment by timeless moment. All of it empty, and yet all of it so full, full with this Life that is in constant flux, even as it remains Itself through it all.*

*And all the while, there is never a self in any of it. Experiences of divine love, no self. Experiences of struggle, no self. Experiences of no-self, no self. Experiences of self, no self. Experiences of profound realization and opening, no self. Experiences of contraction and fear and holding, no self. Experiences of transcendence, no self. Experiences of painful identification, no self.*



*How then do we put an end to it? How do we free ourselves from this mind that keeps weaving its tales of separation and woe, its stories of how wrong it all is and how far away God and Freedom are? We simply look and see that what is aware of the spinning mind is itself not spinning. We look, and in the looking discover that what is awake to the movement of thought is not thinking. We look and see that what is aware of troubling thoughts and feelings is itself not troubled; that what knows the mind's beliefs is not caught in nor defined by those beliefs; that what sees fear is not afraid... In other words, we don't get off the wheel of suffering by trying to get off it - we simply discover what has never set foot on it.*

\*\*\*

*No matter how many experiences of insight or realization may have visited us, we remain left with just this, this fresh moment of awakesness that has never been before and will never be again...*

*This is the collapse of everything - the death of all you ever hoped might happen and all you wished had never been - all futures, all pasts, all dreams, all regrets, all ideas and ideals, vanished, swallowed up in this quiet simplicity, this mystery of now that keeps exploding into what's next, this that is too alive to ever be held or fixed, a bird of time too swift to capture, even though it never flies.*

\*\*\*

*Something appears to be here, appears to be happening, but what that is can never really be known can it, for any idea about what it is or what it should be is just that, an idea, pure imagination.*

*It's quiet outside now.  
Reality is still asleep.  
But soon, She will wake again  
and probably get busy,  
searching for Herself  
once more.  
No matter how much  
we may struggle with it,  
no matter how hard mind may try  
to dress Reality up, make it better,  
judge it, evaluate it,  
try and extract  
something from It,  
Reality remains Herself,  
Life, without a story.  
And yet when a story arises,  
that too is Reality,  
Life, moving as a story...  
There is no escaping Reality,  
no entering or leaving,  
no matter how hard the "me"  
may imagine it can...  
Everything is as it is,  
Reality, in harmony with Itself -  
wind being wind, rain being rain,  
fear, being fear...  
We may argue with it,  
struggle with what is,  
but, we will forever lose  
that quarrel only to find  
ourselves shattered and in tears.  
And then that too,  
will be Reality.*

*There is only Life, Life with no purpose motive or solution, Life with no direction destiny or conclusion, Life with no story goal or resolution, Life, as it is, awake, unadorned, free of clarity or confusion.*

\*\*\*

*The truth is, there is no other. We are everything that is seen, everything that is heard, everything that is touched, everything that is loved, everything that is hated, everything that's attractive, everything that's repulsive. We are the gentle sound of the bird and the bombs that ravage the hearts of men. We are every moment of grasping and the sweet freedom of release. We are happiness and sadness. We are everything that is judged and everything that is forgiven.*

\*\*\*

*We're looking for freedom but what is looking is already free. We're looking for openness but what is looking is already open, We're looking for contentment but what is looking is already content. We're looking for Love but what is looking is already Love.*

*All the strategies we employ to try and “get beyond” the self tend to reinforce the idea that there is in fact something there to get beyond and someone who could actually do that. As it turns out, the effort to transcend the self is ironically a perfect reflection of our obsession with it!*

*But as the realization dawns that no such separate, independent entity actually exists, the struggle to get past it begins to fall away of its own accord. For once it has been seen that the self we imagined we were holding onto isn't actually there, the motivation to try and let that phantom go simply dies.*

\*\*\*

*The One is not capable of separating from the One. Life cannot stand apart from Itself to know what it is. All is dark and unfathomable here. Nothing can ever really be said about this, though the speaking may go on.*

*Is the world actually “out there?” Where is out there? Where do you experience what you call the “world?” Where exactly is that which you believe to be “other?” The truth is that you are the very object of your desire, everything you have ever wanted, but also everything you have ever loathed, everything that is seen and loved and everything you hoped would disappear. You are George Bush and Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Osama, and the Dalai Lama... Just look and you will see it is not possible to tell where you end and the world begins or where the world ends and you begin. The subject has always been the object. The object has always been the subject - no other, no self, just this intimacy life touching life...*

\*\*\*

*The perceiver is everything that is perceived. So you see, you are always looking at your Self.*

*There is this tremendous fascination with discovering what “the secret” is, that which will bring us all the riches we ever dreamed of, manifest all the relationships we’ve ever longed for, shower us with whatever fame, fortune, adoration or enlightenment the mind imagines will bring us happiness. But the real secret is realizing there is no secret, to see that nothing we could ever do, think, feel, find, obtain, or manifest will ever bring us what we truly desire, the only thing we ever really wanted. For what the happiness that is sought is what we have always only been. Contentment is our very nature, the nature of everything. That is the secret. And no one can teach it, transmit it, or sell it to you.*

*This is the real secret, to see that this moment - the very one arising, right now - is not as the mind would have us believe, a means to some imagined end. The moment is the end, the endless miracle of just this.*

*The seeker in us is chasing after (or maybe running away from) certain states of mind. But the truth is that we've never actually experienced a "state" of mind. Yes, we could say that something is undoubtedly happening - a thought, a feeling, a body sensation. But there isn't really anything about what is appearing presently that is static, nothing we can actually put a box or label around and say, "There, that is the state I am in right now."*

*Really, when it comes to "states" of mind that we are either trying to sustain or escape from, it is a hopeless endeavor for there are no states. There is just this, this ever-changing movement of Life, this that is gone long before we ever try to grasp it or push it away.*



\*\*\*

*We seek to find this awareness but the truth is, we can't escape it for awareness is always here. Look at me and awareness is there, looking out from your eyes. Turn away and gaze at the sky or the trees or the grass, and awareness is still there, looking at those things. Turn your gaze within and see your thoughts and feelings and again, there is awareness, looking at your inner world. We don't create awareness - it is already here - and we can't really make it go away either. Awareness just is. It takes no effort to be aware. All we have to do is bring a little attention to it, just notice that awareness is effortlessly and spontaneously present and then allow ourselves to relax into its open, spacious arms and then see how the world looks from that place, the very place we have always been looking from.*

\*\*\*

*This is the end,*

*the end of all knowing  
and not-knowing,*

*the end of obtaining  
and losing,*

*the end of all believing  
or not believing,*

*the end of being someone,  
or no one,*

*the end of understanding  
and not understanding,*

*the end of hope  
and despair.*

*This is the end.*