

THE HEAVENLY BACKFLIP:

Seeing And Being The Unfigureoutable

By J.C. Amberchele

NON-DUALITY PRESS

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LOOK!

Sometimes I want to stop
the first person I see and shout,
LOOK! LOOK! Isn't this
MIRACULOUS?

But of course they'd think I was crazy
and step around me and hurry
on their way.

But no matter, no matter, I say,
for you see, I've
HAPPENED!

Isn't that MARVELOUS?
Like Jack sprung from an invisible box,
I've popped up out of
NOWHERE!

Literally nowhere,
and with no help, and for no reason
but to
BE!

So come. Come from
your contraction, confrontation, insanity.
See how you
VANISH!

And find in your place this wild spectacle,
this riot of sound and shape and color, this
wondrous world that is your Self!

All
right
Here!

INTRODUCTION

WHAT AM I?

The Great Ones, the sages of every age, tell me what to look for. They say that the answer lies not elsewhere but right where I am, here where I am both the center and the source of the universe. They say that, contrary to what I may *think* I am, what I really am is formless, boundless, timeless, and deathless; that I am utterly transparent, empty, not an object. They say that this clarity that lies at the very heart of my humanity is none other than the Self, God, Buddha, Tao, and the Beloved, and that to see and be this requires no change, no achievement, no struggle, for it is already what I am; in fact, I cannot *not* be it. They say that no one else can tell me what I am, that I must see for myself, and should I discover this and live consciously from this, all will be right, all will be true.

This one story, the story of One, has been called the Perennial Philosophy, and is said to be the root message of all the major religions, a message long ago buried in the pronouncements of those who did not understand. But now it is widely available again, this time as the message of Non-duality, in books and at gatherings and online. The WORD—simple, precise, direct—is alive and well and making the rounds, for all who are ready to hear.

And even more direct—that is, direct to this core of Luminous Awareness—is the VISION, the *seeing* of what you are, where you are. This vision is so simple, so easy to see, it is mostly overlooked. And for good reason—it is *what is looking*. And it is this “looking at what is looking,” actually looking back at what you are looking out of, that is the theme of this book.

According to the *Tao Te Ching*, the Tao that can be spoken is not the Tao. One can only point in the direction of awakening, and while most of the pointers in the Non-duality message are conceptual, there is one pointer that dispenses with words and actually, physically points at the Luminous Awareness that you are. It is your index finger, pointing at where you thought you had a face, the same face that others see and say you have, but where you see only emptiness, no-thing, that which was once referred to as your “Original Face,” the one you had before you were born and the one only you can see, right where you are. It is the face of First-Person-Singular, Present Tense, also called the Self, God, Buddha, and the Beloved. It is what you really are and always have been: formless, boundless, timeless, somehow awake, somehow knowing, forever unknown.

The writings and dialogues in this book are offered, then, as pointers, arrows aimed at Who You Really Are. May you see and be what you already are. May you see and be THIS: undeniable, unfigureoutable.

BACKFLIP

Jump back. Do a backflip into Who You Are. It's not there, it's here. All of it. It's all internal. There's no outside. There's no inside, even. It all just IS, for no reason other than heaven. Who are we and what are we doing? This is it! Simply THIS. We're worlding. We're universing. And we're not "we." We're I, awake to the fact of Awakeness, aware, unborn, knowing.

Jump back.

ENLIGHTENMENT

What's your take on enlightenment? I've read about all the great spiritual masters who were enlightened, about the Buddha being enlightened.

No one has ever been enlightened.

So what does enlightenment mean, then?

The best definition I've heard is that enlightenment is the absence of anyone to be enlightened. Put it this way, it's not something you "get." It's not attained because it's what you already are, and what you already are is the absence of what you think you are, a separate, self-existing "self." It's also a term that people use to distinguish between those who supposedly know how things really are and those who don't, the "enlightened" and the "endarkened," which makes no sense to those who know how things really are.

Then why do people strive for it?

Because it's the best game in town, especially when other games are seen through and no longer work. One gets to be "spiritual," a seeker of truth. One has apparent meaning in their life, and can join others who have similar aspirations. One gets to be pious, righteous, and may even experience spiritual "highs" from time to time.

What's so bad about that?

Nothing. It's not bad, it's just not different from any other

game of being “somebody” and having a “life.” It’s no different from being a doctor, a janitor, or a car mechanic.

People want to get free, and think enlightenment is freedom. Apparently you disagree.

They were never bound, and in seeking enlightenment, they bind themselves all the more. It’s the same with “awakening”—they were never asleep, and only sink deeper into dreamland by trying to wake up.

So what can be done? How does anyone go about waking up?

They don’t. What we’re talking about here is merely a shift in perception, and no one does it. It just happens. I can tell you to try this method or that, but it won’t make a bit of difference unless you’re ready, and I don’t even know what “ready” means.

So you’re not enlightened?

No.

Then why are we having this conversation?

Because you think I can help you find enlightenment?

Yes, I guess that’s the reason.

Well, sorry to disappoint you, but in the end, others can’t help you. At some point The Absolute—Who You Really Are—chooses to consciously know itself, and in a flash of *insight*, turns in on itself, *sees* itself, looks back on itself and recognizes the Empty Awareness that it is. It’s called Seeing, and it doesn’t happen to a separate self for the obvious reason that the separate self is an object, an appearance *in*

Seeing, *in Who You Really Are*, and can therefore never see, never know, anything.

This Seeing can be the end of the road, the end of seeking. Or it can be the beginning of a process of confirmation whereby years are spent meditating, reading, meeting with others interested in spiritual matters, and maybe inquiring into the nature of the separate self, searching it out, pinning it down, discovering where it resides if it resides anywhere. This inquiry may reveal the real story of the separate self, that one's identity as the body and mind is in fact just that—a story. In this way, perhaps over and over, as the mind repeatedly searches for and repeatedly fails to find a separate self, conditioning is eroded, and one's identity is left suspended in the unknown.

What happens then? Will I be lost, or will I be awake?

Who you think you are will perhaps be lost, but never awake. *Who You Really Are* is Awakeness Itself, and can never be lost.

Well, I feel a little lost right now.

Hang in there, it only gets worse—and that's the good news!

LOOK AT WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING OUT OF

LOOK AT WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING OUT OF, and notice that there are...

NO BOUNDARIES—Like an open window with no frame, lit from within, notice how huge it is, that the whole world easily fits inside it, for it is entirely...

EMPTY—Not a speck of anything gets in the way. And because it is entirely empty, it is...

ENTIRELY FILLED—With the scene. And it isn't just "space" for the scene, it *is* the scene! Thus, it is WHAT IS. And all of it is presented right...

HERE—And it is wide, wide...

AWAKE!

THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE!

(Search the universe far and wide, and you will never find another awareness. There is only THIS, and it is boundless, empty, filled with the scene, right here, and awake. It is Who You Are, and you are THE ALONE.)

JOURNEY TO HERE

I read something today in a book by a Buddhist nun that was discouraging. She was saying that this is as good as it gets, that the journey of self-improvement—bettering oneself, becoming wiser and more peaceful over the years—is an illusion. This goes against the grain of everything I've been taught. It goes against the grain of the society we live in. And one of the reasons I came to Buddhism in the first place was because I felt it would make me a better person.

“This is as good as it gets.” Who better to have uttered that great line than Jack Nicholson?

Oh... yeah... you're talking about the film.

Yes. But it also could have been uttered by the Buddha. There is not, never was, and never will be a journey. Not of self-improvement, not of life, not even from point A to point B! There is only THIS, appearing as a journey: THIS, pretending to go out and return to Itself, but never being other than Itself.

But don't you find that depressing? Without a journey, without goals and achievement, what's the use of living? Life would be so boring and meaningless.

On the contrary, what a relief! There's no pressure to perform. There's no search. There's nothing to be other than what you are. And instead of the boring daily struggle of hauling an illusory self up an illusory mountain of personal improvement, all the while missing the fabulous view, there

is the excitement of not only *what* shows up but *that* it shows up, right now. What could be more meaningful or less dreary?

So it's like I need to walk instead of run—is that what you're saying? I need to slow down and notice my surroundings more?

No, there's nothing you need to do. What I'm saying points to a fundamental change of outlook, the difference between seeing from the point of view of, as you said, "everything you've been taught," to seeing reality exactly as it is, without the filter of believing you are a separate self. Buddhism isn't about making you a better person. Buddhism is about discovering you are much more and much less than a person. When that is realized, the entire structure of a life involving a past and a future changes. This fundamental change has been called *metanoesis*, or *paravritti*—turning away from the mistaken belief that you're a separate self up against a hostile world "out there." It's the holy backflip, and it's not about a "you" doing anything, improving or not improving.

But what about the Buddhist doctrine of accumulating merit, so that one can be reborn into a more favorable life next time around?

Well, let's just say that Buddhism, like all the other major religions, has its share of foolishness. I can't imagine the Buddha having said one word about accumulating merit, and if he did, surely it was taken out of context or misquoted or in some way reworded years later by those who didn't understand. A doctrine such as that only perpetuates the false belief of being a separate self, the very belief that Buddhism intends to dispel.

So would you say it's a matter of not knowing where you're going?

Well...

Because at least I wouldn't be on a journey, setting goals, trying to have a better life.

Yes, as long as you don't set the goal of not setting goals, you might at least relax. And just maybe the idea that you are merely a separate self will relax also. Try to relax, however, and you'll continue perpetuating that self. This is difficult to hear, I know. It's very deflating to learn that you can't do anything about anything. The good news is that it happens, and when it does, the response can be laughter, awe, relief, and gratitude. However, even what is said here is misleading because it's not an event in the usual sense of the word. It happens outside the concept of time. But it's known, because it's your essence, your nature, as What Is.

Well, how can I know it?

You can't know it because it's not an object. It itself is the knowing. "Hows" and "whys" have no relevance. There's no answer to "how" because it can only lead away from where you are, and there's no answer to "why" because, since there's nothing other than THIS, there's no causal relationship to something else. This is it! This is as good as it gets, and it's What you Are.

QUANDARY

How to say it? How to describe what this is?

I might say what I am not, but even *that* is what I am, for there is nothing apart from what I am. I am Pure Awareness manifesting as this and that, and this and that are what I am: Pure Awareness.

The Negative Way—*neti neti*, “not this, not that”—taken to the limit, might reveal what I am, but only because, taken to the limit, all that is negated is then seen to be what I am!

I am Awareness filled with everything, and not as two. I am void/form. I am Pure Subjectivity. I am Awakeness, Presence, Being... and none of these.

This much I know: I am a quandary unto myself.

SO WHAT?

The way I see it, there are levels of consciousness, and right now we are at an evolutionary stage where more and more people are approaching enlightenment because they are functioning from a higher plane, so to speak.

How do you figure?

In the past, there were a few people here and there who were enlightened, like the Buddha and a couple of his followers, some Zen Masters in China and Japan, a scattering of holy men in India—but now with the internet and globalization, thousands of people are waking up all over the world. Along with this, man is evolving psychically, expanding his consciousness, maybe even developing a larger brain. There are the old stories of how enlightened beings could levitate or fly or be in two places at once, or even walk through walls. I think we'll see more of that in the near future because we'll be operating from a higher level of consciousness.

How could anyone approach enlightenment when what they already are is enlightenment itself? How could there be an enlightened being when enlightenment means that there is no separate being to be it? How could consciousness come in levels when all levels are in consciousness? How can you be in two places at once when you're nowhere at all?

I take it you don't agree.

No, I don't. All that mumbo jumbo about "levels of consciousness" and "approaching enlightenment" only functions

to keep you trapped in the notion of being a separate self in a world of separate things. The same for the *siddhis*—the magical powers that one hopes to gain or attain to when “enlightened.” You can walk through walls? So what? You can levitate or fly around the block? Big deal. None of it means anything to Who You Really Are; none is a prerequisite for becoming Who You Really Are nor a result of discovering Who You Really Are. You are That right now.

Yeah, but that's so deflating. It means I'm stuck with the way things are right now, and I don't particularly like the way things are. It feels like giving up. Plus, I can't believe that any old Joe Schmo could be enlightened.

You're not stuck with the way things are. The way things are is What You Are! You've got one thing right, though—any old Joe Schmo can't be enlightened. No one can.

But it can't just be what's going on right now.

Again, coming from your notion of being a separate self, it isn't what you think is going on. As Who You Really Are, it is *exactly* what is going on. In fact, Who You Really Are is what is going on, including, even, your notion of being a separate self.

That's hard to accept. I'm not willing to be the world's punching bag.

No, of course not. If you believe you are self-existing and apart from Oneness, you might win a few rounds, but you'll lose most, and eventually you'll get knocked out of the ring altogether. And that's okay. It's how Who You Really Are is manifesting right now. Right now it's playing the part of a separate individual who doesn't want to be a punching bag but, because of his conditioned beliefs, is bound to be one

anyway. If you get around to investigating those beliefs, you may find them to be untrue. Or you could look within—actually take a look at what you are looking out of—and realize Who You Really Are in a flash. By that I mean that you can turn your attention around 180 degrees and see That Which Is Seeing. When I do this, I see nothing. But it's not the kind of nothing that's the opposite of something; it's not a mere blank. This nothing is *aware*. And it's huge, in that everything easily fits within it, including the universe as a whole. Take a look, and take what you see on present evidence, not what you assume or believe because it's what you learned as a child from others. Others (and cameras), from where they are, see a right-side-up human being with a head on top and feet below. But is that what you see from where you are? Are you not, from your point of view, upside-down and headless? Look back. Do you see your face or do you see clear, open, boundless awareness, filled with the scene? Hasn't it always been this way, even though you haven't noticed it? See as a little child would, with that same innocent curiosity prior to thoughts and beliefs. Are you really the way others see and say you are? Why take their word for it, when you can plainly see what you are for yourself?

I don't see the point. That "looking back" thing doesn't do anything for me. I mean, it's interesting and all that, but what's that got to do with enlightenment?

You see, this is what happens when you hold false assumptions and expectations—you want "the point" to be other than what is. Rather than see the truth about Who You Really Are, you seek fireworks and magic. Who You Really Are is all very ordinary, just now, just now, just as it is.

And oh, before I forget, Who You Really Are is the center of the universe, a universe that appears within you, *as* you. So what? Well, some call it God.

SENSATIONAL BODY

Telling the truth, taking exactly what is presented and not what I have learned from others nor what I assume nor imagine, I ask: What is this flesh-body that “follows me around” (as a friend likes to say) all day and night? Is it not, like every other thing, a sensation experienced in and by Awareness? I see it, hear it and feel it as I see, hear and feel other objects, and yet I call this flesh-body “me” and other objects “not me,” as though it is the body that experiences the sensations, as though Awareness is a mere by-product of the body, as though what I am *is* the body.

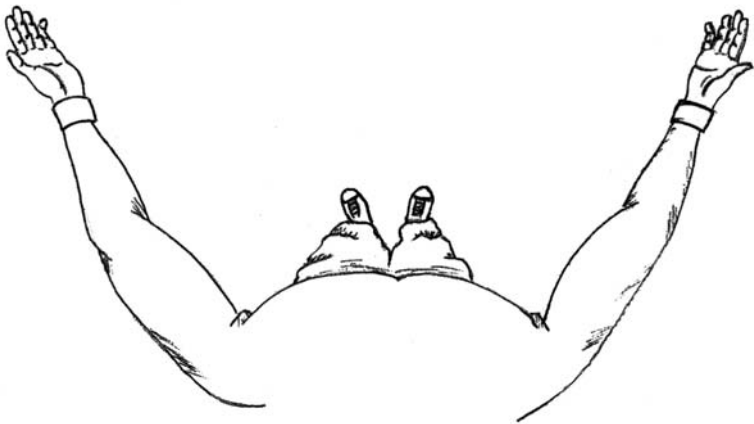


Fig.1

Clearly, with one look, it is the opposite. And to prove it, I have only to compare this First-Person-Singular body with those other second- and third-person bodies. Taking exactly what is presented—which is to see from the First-Person

perspective—all other bodies are right-side-up and headed, while this body is undeniably upside-down and headless. This body, my resurrection body—with arms outstretched to infinity, the enormous torso, truncated legs and little feet, the grass, the buildings, the mountains and sky—this is my true body, all of it here in this vast emptiness, an emptiness that is aware capacity for all that passes through. You have a face over there, but here my face is the scene, vibrant and alive, changing moment by moment.

Can you not say the same? Are you really what others see from where they are, or are you what you see from where you are? How could they know, when only you can say? Only you can see what a truly sensational body you have. It's called *Everything*.