

From Self to Self



Notes and Quotes in Response to
Awakening to the Dream

Leo Hartong

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With gratitude and appreciation to:

Tony Parsons, Nathan Gill, ‘Sailor’ Bob Adamson
and the many voices of the One.



*Since things neither exist nor don't exist,
are neither real nor unreal,
are utterly beyond adopting and rejecting,
one might as well burst out laughing.*

Longchenpa Rabjampa - Tibet, 14th century

Contents

Introduction	9
1. God's toothache	13
2. How to deal with opposing approaches?	15
3. Splitting IT	18
4. My mind is always complaining	23
5. Near death experiences	25
6. What bothers me about Advaita	27
7. Is this witnessing?	30
8. About addiction	32
8. A False Sense of liberation	34
9. Time tested rules	36
10. Nothing happens	38
11. The final pinnacle of evolution	40
12. Looking for my bliss	42
13. Today there is freedom!	45
14. What is it that makes the ONE appear to be many?	48
15. Why?	50
16. Is there an even playing field for all?	51
17. Is being good or bad of any relevance?	53
18. The ultimate non-dual reality	55
19. What is the Dark Night of the Soul?	58
20. Is awareness dependant on a body/mind?	61
21. Five in one	63
22. The great paradox	68
23. Sadness and a steady diet of Advaita.	70
24. How to play the game?	72
25. Don't worry, be happy	74
26. The real and the unreal	76
27. Be the way you are	78
28. Clarity, the senses and the brain	80
29. Acceptance of what is	82

30. Other people's answers	85
31. No purpose or meaning	88
32. Why do I ask the question?	90
33. Who creates all the thoughts?	92
34. Science and the theory of evolution	95
35. How to stop thinking?	99
36. False lucidity	102
37. False lucidity, part 2	104
38. Understanding is everything	107
39. I am not the doer	109
40. Being close to awakening	112
41. I know	114
42. This crazy see-saw.	117
43. There is no separation.	119
44. Perhaps we need a new language?	121
45. This sense of self	122
46. A free hand to the bullies	124
47. Who knows?	125
48. Sadness and hopelessness	127
49. I feel like a dog chasing its tail	130
50. A real sense of being stuck	133
51. The presence of being	136
52. How might one achieve it?	138
53. The longing continues	141
54. Chasing realization	144
55. Obsessed with this search for truth	150
56. What do 'I' do when awakening has happened?	153
57. Is awareness the 'doer?'	155
58. This body will die	157
59. Can there be knowing without a body/mind?	160
60. Slightly out of focus	164
61. Choicelessly aware	166
62. Some hard questions	167
63. On having a distinctively troublesome mind	172
64. There is nothing else	176

65. Is this the same Advaita?	179
66. Why is there anything at all?	181
67. This sense of self	185
68. Trying to explain the unexplainable	188
69. It happens when it happens	190
70. Are awakenings happening now more than ever before?	192
71. From where do all those appearances arise?	194
72. What do we really know, for sure?	197
73. Why is this awareness restricted to one body/mind?	199
74. The seeking curse	201
75. The full significance	205
76. Ending my spiritual search	207
77. Being present	211
78. Mortality vs. immortality	213
79. Struggling with resistance	217
80. Doing something or doing nothing	220
81. What about this intellectual approach?	222
82. The central 'I' character	224
83. A state I yearn for	229
84. The body is an illusion	231
85. How can Awareness be present during deep sleep?	233
86. Nothing happened	234
87. One Source	237
88. Is there any spontaneity to life?	239
89. Boldly go where no 'I' has gone before	241
90. What about channelling?	244
91. How to go forward?	246
92. Journey's end	249

Afterword	253
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The Mind of Absolute Trust or the Hsin-hsin Ming By Seng-ts'an, Third Chan Patriarch, translated by Richard B. Clarke.	255
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Introduction

You hold in your hands a compilation of expressions, questions and answers that came about in response to the book 'Awakening to the Dream.' What is being communicated here is something immediate and simple. It is about who or what you truly are right at this instant. Paradoxically it also is a mystery that can appear complex when the mind tries to catch it in a net of words and concepts. Let me say right from the start that such attempts will fail. For that reason this writing does not claim to be an explanation, but it is presented as an exploration through a collection of pointers that rely on repetition and metaphor.

Here is the first metaphor, in which this text is compared to a book about humor. Humor is a great topic. However, we can talk and write about it all we want without ever taking hold of its essence, whereas merely telling a good joke at the right moment IS humor. Of course humor is not limited to telling jokes, and many pages can be filled in an attempt to grasp the ungraspable essence of humor. Such a book can promote laughter, but it cannot tell you how to get a joke. One either gets it or not. When one does not get it, explaining the joke usually kills it. So what to do? Nothing... or perhaps let's just tell some more jokes until one hits home. All this for no special reason, but if I have to give one, it would be that joy shared, is joy multiplied.

So here is a small joke/quote:

Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on.

~ Winston Churchill ~

The second metaphor, which is used repeatedly in this book, shows that something clear and simple can seem complex when we try to put it into words. The metaphor is space; it is clear and obvious as a direct experience, yet seemingly mysterious when we attempt to describe it. We could for example say that space is nothing, but that nevertheless all objective appearances depend on it. We could say that we see it everywhere, yet we could as easily describe it as invisible. We could say that it has no location, or we could say that it is everywhere and that everything that has a location appears in it. As you see, this description is full of seemingly mutually exclusive observations, which make everything said here true and untrue at the same time.

So, everything appears in space, but where does space appear? It appears on, in – and as an expression of – something even more subtle.

The merest description that can be given to this consciousness is that it is as fine, as subtle, as space. In Maturity your consciousness is God.

~ Nisargadatta Maharaj ~

We can give this subtleness names such as Pure Awareness, Consciousness, Essence, Tao, the Supreme Identity, God, the Self, or simply IT. The word ‘IT’ may seem to lack warmth, or any other attribute, but it is precisely this lack that makes it such a good pointer. The mind finds it impossible to turn the word ‘IT’ into a picture, which is

perfect, as it points here to the Ultimate Subject, which cannot be made into an object. This Ultimate Subject is the True Identity, 'your' Original Face, or Pure Awareness. IT is what you are, not just what you think you are, and like space IT is simple, clear, obvious and yet indescribable.

Here are some other metaphors to help us point at the indescribable: We can learn to play the piano, but what the experience of music entails, and what musicality actually is, cannot be learned from reading. Also, we may know the taste of a peach, but we cannot tell this to someone who never ate one. Our words can guide the interested person to a fruit seller or a peach tree, but only the tasting itself will answer her question.

This text is pointing you to the metaphorical peach tree of what you truly are, but it does not claim to explain the 'taste' of this essence. Once it is tasted, the pointers have served their purpose. One can then read books like this for the pleasure of reading, or completely forget about them.



The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap.

The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare.

Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words.

Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?

~ Chuang Tzu ~

1. God's toothache

Question: Are you saying that knowing all pain and suffering is universal, frees one from it? Doesn't pain and suffering continue to exist whether it is seen as that of the microcosm or the macrocosm? Is it God's toothache?

Answer: At the relative level of the game, life is experienced through the polar opposites such as pleasure/pain, good/evil, high/low, on/off and so on. These contrasting poles are known from and – generated by – the perspective of an apparent separate character. All apparent free will of this illusory character is aimed at getting away from the minus pole and moving towards the plus or pleasure pole.

The end of suffering is not found in the eradication of one pole while maintaining the other, but suffering's true nature might become clear by asking who it is that suffers.

Liberation can come through the realization that there is in fact no separation anywhere and that there is no individual that does the suffering. In this recognition, fire still burns, the wind still blows, the rain comes down and the sun shines, for all... and for no one.

It is not so much that one is freed from suffering as that it is realized that there is no one to be freed. This perspective is pointed to in the following quote, which has been assigned to the Buddha:

*The deed there is, but no doer thereof.
Suffering exists, but no one who suffers.*

Suffering is content. Awareness is context. Awareness is the source in which all arises and dissolves. Awareness remains unaffected, just like the mirror remains empty, regardless of what seems to appear in it. Recognize that you are the unaffected Awareness/Witness to which the person and its experiences – good and bad – are a witnessed object. HERE the point of gravity shifts from content to context. This context is empty and marvelous and it does not suffer. It is the peace prior to the mind-generated divisions of good/bad, pain/pleasure, yin/yang. You are that Peace.



You are the unchangeable Awareness in which all activity takes place.

Always rest in peace. You are eternal Being, unbounded and undivided.

Just keep Quiet. All is well. Keep Quiet Here and Now.

You are Happiness, you are Peace, you are Freedom.

Do not entertain any notions that you are in trouble.

Be kind to yourself.

Open to your Heart and simply Be.

~ Papaji ~

2. How to deal with opposing approaches?

Question: Some Advaita teachers say: ‘Recognize who you really are, train in that recognition and get stabilized in that recognition’. Others say there is nothing to gain, there is no you; there is just this!

The first approach offers me a method to deal with my emotions, frustrations and my mistaken belief of being a person. Although I appreciate the latter approach, it offers me no method to attain stabilization in That which I really am.

Do you have suggestions how to deal with these opposite approaches?

Answer: Methods for dealing with emotions are fine, but they belong to the realm of psychology and have very little or nothing to do with clear seeing. Such methods are about comforting and adjusting the person. What is discussed here is about seeing through the person as an illusion, not about giving the person methods. The person working on the person is as likely to succeed as a trap that has been set to catch it self.

The problem with trying to get THERE is that it automatically confirms NOT being there. It confirms that there really is a separate you that has to get somewhere later on. This keeps the illusion of separation and time alive and well. There truly is no separate character to reach a future state of timelessness.

This is about the recognition of what it truly is that lives, thinks, sees, and breathes, through and as the

apparent character. It is the One Substance. It is as it is, just THIS... Presence Awareness. ‘Little you’ can’t become stabilized in it, but YOU are That.

Response: It’s all so fascinating – it’s all done with smoke and mirrors! Ashtavakra says ‘the world is a magic show’ – and so it is. To the topic: the author’s reply states that the emotions have little or nothing to do with clear seeing, but does anything have to do with clear seeing? Clearly not. For what is there to see? And who is there to see ‘it’??

Our words trip us up in every case. *neti, neti, neti*. Questions?, maybe, but answers? no.

Dattatreya (the Avadhut Gita) says it’s all prattle. But oh how we love our prattle!

Answer: Yes, all our questions, answers and responses are words by their very nature. No one will try to drink the word water, but when it comes to talking about THIS, sometimes it is forgotten that words are mere symbols. As such they point AT, but can never contain THAT, which contains the words. Nevertheless I love the words of Ashtavakra and Dattatreya.

So here are some more words:

What I said was not so much that emotions have nothing to do with what is pointed at, but that methods for working *on* emotions have very little or nothing to do with it. That it equals working on the person instead of seeing through the person.

In the end there is only THIS which cannot be captured in words; It simply is/isn’t including apparent characters and emotions. If words make no sense we can always notice the spaces between them, or the background on which they appear.

Response: Well maybe there are answers after all – yours was a good one and I thank you for it. Actually there are and there are not – this is the best of all possible worlds!

I like the idea of seeing ‘through’ this person that I usually think that I am – actually that I ‘always’ think that I am when I am thinking. It seems that I can only see through when I stop thinking. STOP THINKING! It’s like the space between words or the spaces between inhalation and exhalation. I remain ‘the nectar of knowledge’, homogenous existence, like the sky.



I AM

‘I am the supporter of the universe, the father, the mother, and the grandfather. I am the object of knowledge, the sacred syllable OM, and the Vedas. I am the goal, the supporter, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge, the friend, the origin, the dissolution, the foundation, the substratum, and the immutable seed.’

From: ‘The Bhagavad-Gita’ translated by Dr. Ramanada Prasad

3. Splitting IT

Question: I have an intuitive sense that fundamental to sustaining the sense of being a separate individual, is the tendency of the mind to split the whole of creation into a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ side, where the one is wanted and the other is unwanted.

This split manifests in both overt and subtle ways. Religions manifest the split in a very gross, ‘in your face’ way. I was at a church wedding the other day, and was treated to a most hilarious manifestation of that split by the priest on duty. I found it highly entertaining, but on another level, it reminded me again of how powerful this belief system is, which splits life into ‘good’ and ‘evil’, ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’, ‘sin’ and ‘virtue’.

Many people have left this kind of ‘gross splitting’ behind and have embarked on so-called ‘spiritual or psychological paths of self-discovery’. But the split continues. In Jungian circles, they will talk of ‘loving your shadows into wholeness’. But... the so-called ‘shadow’ IS already the wholeness! Other people embark on strategies of ‘embracing everything, both pleasant and unpleasant feelings’, which is again a more subtle manifestation of the same split, whereby the ‘separate individual’ still tries to transform the unpleasant to get to a state that is more pleasant. We could continue giving examples: all paths are based on this split, whether it’s gross and ‘in your face’ or more subtle and seemingly refined.

The paradox to me is that even in awakening, this split continues. It is not that we reach some ‘ultimate state

of pure unconditional love whereby we have no more preferences'. That is just bullshit. The character is part of the play and will therefore continue having likes and dislikes. To put it bluntly: any human being will prefer a walk on a beautiful beach above a dark torture chamber. It's a lot easier to see 'the divine' in the playful innocence of a little child than in a bloodthirsty rapist. So, what actually changes? Yes, I know that source manifests as 'all that is' and that 'all that is' is expressed in duality. There can be no manifestation without duality. That is clear. But in day-to-day living, I cannot escape my preferences, I cannot escape the splitting. So to come back to my initial point: yes, I sense the mind sustains the sense of being a separate individual by splitting life into a 'wanted' and 'unwanted' side, but this seems inescapable...? How can this ever resolve?

Answer: As Dogen said:

'Although everything has Buddha nature, we love flowers, and we do not care for weeds.'

Preferences occur, as do apparent differences; nothing but the absolute is absolute, and so, in day to day living, one man's weed appears as another man's flower. There is nothing that can or needs to be done about this.

This manifestation, as seen from the mind, will always function within the pairs of opposites. As such awakening is not an end to the 'show' as it appears now. With awakening comes the recognition that there is no separate character to awaken; which makes this whole awakening thing sort of a prank the Self plays on the Self. When the snake is projected into the rope, the rope is still the rope;

when multiplicity is projected on the One Screen it still is the One Screen. As soon as it is clear that there really is no separate character, preferences, likes and dislikes are no longer seen as attributes belonging to ‘someone’ who needs to resolve them. They’re now recognized as some of the countless ways the One appears to itself; innumerable variations, but all on a single ‘theme.’

In the body/mind the natural functioning expresses as certain characteristics, which can be labelled as preferences. We could for example say that certain flowers grow best in the shade, while others do better in direct sunlight. We could express this same idea, by saying that certain flowers prefer the shade, while others prefer the sun.

By exclusively identifying with the body/mind complex, and its undeniable preferences, an artificial idea of a personal self ‘having’ those preferences appears. But closer, closer yet, closer than close, is the centre from which the questions and preferences are seen. This centre is not a person, nor is it a thought or a state. We could point at it by calling it the Unknowable Knower who has room for all characters, thoughts and states. Because of its unconditional non-quality of limitless spaciousness, it has also been called ‘pure and unconditional love.’

This ‘something/no-thing’ has actually no attributes – not even ‘pure unconditional love’ – and it’s absolutely zero to the mind. There are no ‘handles’ on it and it cannot be reached, much like you cannot reach the place where you are.

All ‘handles’ are, as you pointed out yourself, steeped in duality; even the ‘handle’ of awakening. They are all mind-generated, and on closer inspection, it can be seen that the mind itself is duality in action. The mind splits

the One into the many and even the concept 'I am' implies a 'you are.' It is this mind that introduces the question 'How to resolve the splitting?' without realizing that it is the splitting. It is mind itself that generates all opposites; from the most obvious to the most subtle. In the Tao Te Ching this splitting has poetically been called 'mutual arising.'

When everyone recognizes beauty as beautiful, there is already ugliness.

When everyone recognizes goodness as good, there is already evil.

'To be' and 'not to be' arise mutually;

Difficult and easy are mutually realized;

Long and short are mutually contrasted.

And in the same book it says:

The nameless is the origin of heaven and earth.

Naming (the mind) is the mother of the ten thousand things.

Like fire cannot escape heat, the mind cannot escape the splitting it is. In the same way the 'I' cannot escape preferences, as preferences are part of the conceptual 'I' structure. If there is an escape option at all, it is in the realization that no escape is needed, as this 'I' is not all that I AM.

'Naming' is the origin of all apparent duality and it is the way the game is played. Without this context there would be no appearance of play at all; but regardless of how it appears, the 'origin of heaven and earth' itself is never divided. Everything is already perfectly resolved in

the Single Source from which this manifestation arises and to which it returns.



*As the rivers flowing east and west
Merge in the sea and become one with it,
Forgetting they were ever separate streams,
So do all creatures lose their separateness
When they merge at last into pure Being.
There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that!*

From: The Chandogya Upanishad

4. My mind is always complaining

Question: I am frustrated with not being able even to have a split second experience of the Self. My mind is always complaining about this and that.

When it is hot it complains about the heat and when the body does not feel too well it complains. So this complaining goes on all the time. I don't blame the body and mind for complaining because there is no escape from the tyranny of life. It doesn't mean I am not happy. I am often happy when everything is going my way, according to plan, but otherwise I have a flood of angry thoughts. The mind is the way it is, it can't stop. I think you know what I mean. Is there any way out of this dream, which seems very real while it lasts?

Answer: Your frustration is understandable, because you're looking in the wrong direction. The Self is not an experience; it is the experiencing. Like sight can see but never be seen, the experiencing can experience, but not be experienced. You are that experiencing.

This understanding already comes through in your words. Who is it that sees the mind jump around? Since it sees the mind's activity it must be beyond the mind. There is no escape from the tyranny of life because there is no 'you' that is bound by it.

Look inside to where there supposedly is an 'I.' Can you find it, or is it just more thought? And what is thought? Isn't it just mind again? There is no you to be happy or upset. There are just emotions arising and the mind labels

them as positive or negative. This labeling seems to be done by an 'I' but truly it is nothing but mind also.

Relax into the seeing. Realize that all that arises is the seen. It comes, it lingers for a while and it's gone, but the seeing (the Self) remains.

The angry thoughts have no power. The power they apparently have comes from beyond them and from the mistaken belief that they are YOUR thoughts. Watch the thinking (you are the watcher), see how thoughts come up by themselves, and only after they have arisen, comes the thought that it is YOU who had this thought. Again, this is nothing but the next, self-arising, spontaneous thought.

Do not simply accept or reject this, but verify it. No one else can do it.



All there is is this. All there is is the seeing of this. Whatever that is... feeling warm, hearing a sound, sitting on a chair, feeling angry, feeling frustrated, all of these things are simply sensations but there is no fixed datum called me in here... just happenings.

Tony Parsons in Amsterdam, Saturday 27th July 2002
<http://www.theopensecret.com/>