

# THE WONDER OF BEING

AWAKENING TO AN  
INTIMACY BEYOND WORDS

Jeff Foster

*A combined and fully revised  
edition of Jeff Foster's first two books,  
Life Without A Centre and Beyond Awakening*

NON-DUALITY PRESS

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO  
everybody who made this book possible.  
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THE WONDER OF BEING

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nhoestreicher@googlemail.com

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*“Listen to your life.  
See it for the fathomless mystery that it is.  
In the boredom and pain of it  
no less than in the excitement and gladness:  
touch, taste, smell your way to the holy  
and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis  
all moments are key moments,  
and life itself is grace.”*

- Frederick Buechner

*“When you realise how perfect everything is  
you will tilt your head back and laugh at the sky.”*

- The Buddha

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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

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

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

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

With love from yourself,

**Jeff Foster**  
*Brighton, England, March 2010*

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# BEYOND WORDS

*“As it is, life has no meaning beyond itself.  
It is always at the point of completion and, simultaneously,  
as fresh as the morning dew at the dawn of creation.”*

- Leo Hartong

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

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

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

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

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

And what is that miracle?

It is the present moment.

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

It is life itself.

It is everything and it is *nothing*: No thing. Beyond the stories

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

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

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

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

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

Why not simply stay silent and be done with it?

This is a very good question!

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

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

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

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

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

It goes beyond 'my religion versus your religion', 'my God versus your God', or 'my beliefs versus your beliefs'. This possibility goes beyond everything that apparently separates us.

It reaches beyond 'I'm a Christian, you're a Jew', beyond 'I'm black, you're white', beyond 'I'm right, you're wrong', beyond even 'I'm a man, you're a woman'. It is far beyond 'I'm enlightened, you're unenlightened', 'I'm awake and you're not', 'I *get it* and you don't', 'I'm nondual but you're still dual', or even 'I'm here and you're there'. Beyond all of these dualistic opposites – that's where the true freedom lies.

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

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

## SHARING THIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is the mystery that we'll be exploring.

## YOUR OWN ABSENCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## STORY OF A NOBODY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Don't believe this? Check – it's always now. Whatever happens, happens now. Is there ever a time when you cannot say 'it is now'? Can anything happen if it is not happening

now? Even memory – the story of a past – is that not just a bundle of thoughts arising presently? All the seeking, is that not just a bundle of conditioning – memory and its projections into the future – appearing right now?

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

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

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

I had overlooked for my entire life.

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

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

## THE EVOLUTION OF THIS BOOK

This book began its life as two separate books (how ironic!) called *Life Without A Centre* and *Beyond Awakening*. Both books had been compiled from writings made in the years following what some might call ‘awakening from the dream of separation’. The books emerged from the clear seeing that I was totally free.

Since then, although the essential seeing has not changed – it is always present, it is life itself, how could it change? – the way in which I *express* this message has evolved substantially. The expression has become more balanced, more inclusive. I have become more aware of how certain words can be interpreted and, more importantly, *mis*-interpreted, by a spiritual seeker.

And so for this combined and revised edition, I went back to the original essays, adding and subtracting words, sentences, paragraphs and sometimes whole pages, in order to improve the clarity of the writing and bring the expression right up to date, while retaining the essence of the original ‘outpourings’.

Nearly five years on from the first essay I ever wrote (which appears in this book as ‘The Buddha in a Corner Shop’), this book appears in your hands! What a privilege it is to be able to share *The Wonder of Being* with you now, a book which emerged from the very depths of Being, from a place so intimate I never thought I’d be able to communicate it to anyone. Life obviously had other plans. What a mysterious universe this is...

\*

Originally, the seeing was dramatic. These days, the drama of it all has died down, but it still goes on: gently, sweetly, lovingly, innocently, always there in the background, whispering so very softly that *everything is okay, everything is always okay*.

What a perfect play it has been, and still is: the seeking, the suffering, the drama of it all, and the falling away, the collapse into presence, into the clarity that reveals itself in and as the utterly ordinary things of life.

And none of this has anything to do with Jeff Foster. Oh yes, that's the grand cosmic joke here: it has nothing to do with me, and everything to do with – well, *everything*. This is about life expressing itself, not the experiences or beliefs of an individual called Jeff Foster. Jeff is a part of this, yes, but ultimately he is only a story appearing in life, no more nor less important than any other story. And that is the freedom...

## FALLING IN LOVE

*T*his is all there is – what a deadly message for the seeker!

I would totally understand if you were to take one look at this book and walk away. I would have done the same at one time. As a very serious and very intense spiritual seeker, I wouldn't have been able to hear that my seeking was the very cause of the sense of lack that I was trying to escape.

*Who am I without my seeking?*

*Is there really anything other than the present appearance of everything?*

These are the questions that threaten to undermine the seeker at its very foundations.

Years ago, my heart was set on a future liberation. The seeing that liberation is always here and now would have destroyed my seeking on the spot, and dissolved my identity as a seeker, which was all I had left at the time.

One day you pick up this book and it means nothing to you. The next day, it resonates. That is the mystery of this, and nobody understands it. Nobody can tell you when that resonance will happen. Perhaps the seeking needs to fail on some level before you become open to a possibility that goes beyond seeking. But no matter: there is a perfect unfolding to all of this, and everything happens exactly when it needs to, and I don't ever want to force anyone to listen to what I have to say unless there is an openness there. The need to convert anyone would only stem from my own fear, anyway.

You see, everything exists in perfect harmony with everything else, and that includes the whole spiritual search, the endless seeking of the mind, and perhaps, finally, the falling away of that seeking, and an effortless resting with what is.

You cannot know what an orange tastes like until you taste an orange. You cannot eat a meal by studying the menu. This book is not about an intellectual understanding, but a plunge into an intimacy with everything.

That is true intimacy: *intimacy with everything*. You see, true freedom is not about getting rid of anything. It is about falling in love with everything. That *falling in love* is also the *falling away* of the seeker, the falling away of everything that separates you from life as it is.

As a spiritual seeker, I wanted more than anything to get rid of Jeff, the individual, the seeker. I saw so clearly that Jeff was the only thing standing between me and freedom. Jeff and all his problems, Jeff and his difficult life – I thought that I needed to get rid of this in order to be free. But what I couldn't see back then was that the one who was trying to get rid of Jeff, *was* Jeff. Vicious circle upon vicious circle. No wonder the seeking ended in despair. *I was trying to get rid of something that wasn't actually there.*

Of course, it was never about getting rid of Jeff. It was always about *falling in love* with Jeff, and through him, everything. That is true freedom: a freedom that denies nothing. Oneness is not about getting rid of the individual, as we are told so often by spiritual teachers. Why would Oneness reject any part of itself? Oneness is everything and therefore *includes* everything. The individual, the seeker, even *that* is included in the radical embrace that you are. Even the seeker is just Oneness dressed up as a seeker, looking for itself...

I'm not even telling you to stop seeking, because it wasn't you that started seeking. Seeing through the seeking is enough. And the seeing through of the seeking *is* the ending of it. Falling in love *is* the falling-away. Seeing life for what it is, *is* love. Not the love of the mind (possession, expectation, desire), but a love with no name that has always been calling you back to itself.

Love is the death of the seeker, the death of *two*. As Jesus said, "You have to lose your life to save it".

If you are ready to open your eyes and look afresh at life, if you are willing to leave behind all of your concepts and see with the eyes of a child, who knows what the words in this book may evoke?

POINTING OUT  
THE OBVIOUS

*“You don’t need to leave your room.  
Remain sitting at your table and listen.  
Don’t even listen, simply wait.  
Don’t even wait, be quite still and solitary.  
The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked.  
It has no choice. It will roll in ecstasy at your feet.”*

– Franz Kafka

Right now...

*Is breathing happening?*

*Are sounds appearing?*

*Are thoughts coming and going?*

*Are feelings in the body happening?*

*Could it be that you are already awake?*

*Could it be that you were never actually asleep?*

\*

This is all there is.

What's happening is all there is.

*Pretty obvious, right?*

Yet you believe that you are an entity, a 'person' somehow separate from life. An individual who experiences life. Someone to whom life happens. A 'me' at the centre of everything.

But is there really anyone here *experiencing* life, or is there just life happening?

Is there somebody there pulling the strings, somebody in

control? Somebody seeing, hearing, tasting and touching?  
Or are seeing, hearing, tasting and touching just happening  
by themselves?

Is there a dancer *doing* the dance, or is there only the dance?

Does life have a centre, or might that have been a dream?

Have you ever stopped to look? Really *look*?

## EFFORTLESS COMING AND GOING

**N**otice: sounds come and go, effortlessly. There's nothing you need to do, or give up doing, for this to be. Sounds simply happen. They appear here. Right here, where you are. They arise spontaneously in this aliveness.

Have you ever heard a sound that wasn't right here, where you are?

Have you ever heard a sound that wasn't a *present* sound?

*Notice:* feelings in the body happen. Perhaps a tightness in the chest. Perhaps a rumbling in the stomach. Sensations appear and disappear. They arise and fall away, continually.

Right here and right now, an entire world appears, a whole universe of present sights, sounds and smells, thoughts, sensations in the body...

And there is something here that gently and effortlessly notices all of that.

Don't try and think about any of this. Thinking won't get you here.

*Is there not a sense of a presence that sits 'behind' everything, watching everything?*

*Is there not something here that is effortlessly aware of sounds coming and going, of feelings in the body coming and going?*

*Something that is not really a 'something' at all, because it is*

*not part of that which comes and goes?*

*Could that 'something' be the no-thing that allows everything to be?*

*Has it not always been there? Right from the beginning?*

## PERFECTLY FREE

**L**ook again: thoughts come and go. See how they arise, linger a while, and pass. (If you have ever meditated, you'll know what I'm talking about.)

There is something here that watches silently as all thoughts come and go. All the thoughts in the world come and go in this: this presence, this awareness, this consciousness, this being. (Call it whatever you want to – it's not an 'it' anyway.)

Thoughts come and go, and what becomes clear is that there is something here that is already free from all thoughts.

Something here is already liberated from the entire story that thought has constructed about 'me and my life'.

Something here is already free from 'me and my problems', 'me and my spiritual seeking', 'me and my difficulties', 'me and my successes and failures'.

There is something here that is already free from past and future. Something here that is already free from 'you'.

*'You' are just a bundle of stories, arising presently.* What you really are cannot be touched by any of those stories.

*Notice:*

Sounds come and go. Clouds in the sky come and go. Cars and trees and people come and go. Smells and tastes come and go. Feelings in the body come and go. Thoughts come and go. Pain comes and goes. The body itself comes and goes. An entire world comes and goes, an entire lifetime, yet there

is something here that is not touched by any of that coming and going. There is something here that never enters into the stream of coming and going, cause and effect, time and space. There is something here that is already totally, radically free from all duality.

There is a freedom here that does not come and go. Could this freedom be identical with what you are?

## INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

*Is there really an inside and an outside? Or is that just another thought, another concept that comes and goes?*

Notice: sounds in the room come and go. Bodily feelings come and go. Thoughts come and go. None of these are 'inside' or 'outside'. They are just happenings. 'Inside' and 'outside' are just more labels that appear. 'Inside and outside' is just another story that comes and goes in this awareness. Just another happening.

*Prior to the story of 'inside and outside' can anything really be inside or outside?*

That bird singing. Is it happening inside of you, or outside of you? Is there really any division there, or is that just another creation of thought?

Come back to the bird singing. Is there really an inside and outside, or is there just the bird singing? Going on present evidence, what is more true? That you (a separate person) hear a bird? Or that birdsong just appears *here*?

Is there even a 'bird' that's outside of you, or is there just the singing? Without the concept 'bird', how would you know that it was a bird singing?

Without the concepts (assumptions), you hear that ineffable birdsong for the very first time, and you recognise that it is not separate from what you are.

*Tweet-tweet! Tweet-tweet!*

## NON-SEPARATION

Everything seems to arise within presence, within awareness, within consciousness, within being; we can give it a million different names, but should we really call it anything at all? Should we even speak about it? Doesn't speaking about it suggest that it is an 'it', something (some *thing*) separate from everything else?

How can we speak about it when it's not an 'it' at all?

Again, I ask: should we even speak about it?

*Drop the words for a moment, and notice:* you have no way of separating yourself from what you are seeing, touching, hearing. Presence-awareness-consciousness-being (let's call it 'aliveness') seems to mix and mingle with everything that you see, hear, touch, taste. So much so that it seems to be identical with everything that arises.

You see, this aliveness is not *separate* from the sounds in the room, from the feelings in the body, from the thoughts that arise and fall away. In fact, aliveness *is* the sounds, aliveness *is* the feelings, aliveness *is* the thoughts that arise. Aliveness is the ground and substance of all things, and everything is 'made' of it: the one who hears the sounds as much as the sounds themselves. You are made of the same substance as everything that you see, feel, smell, taste, and touch. What we call 'experience' is really a love affair with everything that arises...

Can you find anything – anything at all – that separates you from the sound of that bird singing? From that feeling

in the stomach? From these presently-arising thoughts?

*In the final analysis, you have no way of separating yourself from life.*

So, who are you? Are you the sounds in the room? Well no, you might say: you are aware of sounds, so you are not those sounds. Are you feelings in the body? No, they arise and fall away, and there is something here that does not fall away when they fall away. Are you any of the thoughts that arise? No, you are aware of them, so you are not them. They come and go. Everything does.

There seems to be something here that is already free from the world of passing forms. There seems to be something here that remains when everything else has come and gone. A 'peace that passes all understanding'. An openness that is already open and never closed up. A gentle seeing that welcomes everything as it is born and dies.

So you are *not* sounds, smells, thoughts, feelings. But it would be equally true to say that you *are* those sounds, smells, thoughts and feelings.

*Non-duality does not just mean 'not duality'. It also includes apparent duality. It is not duality, but it is also duality, because it is everything.*

You *are* everything that arises. And, at the same time, you are nothing, no-thing, because you are the wide open space that holds everything. You are everything, but because you are aware of everything, you cannot be any of the things of which you are aware. Nothing, everything. Everything, nothing.

*Tweet-tweet! Tweet-tweet!*

What about that bird singing over there? You are not that, because you are aware of that. But at the same time, you have no way of separating yourself from that. At the same time, you are that.

The bird sings, and you are the bird singing. The bird sings, and that is you. How intimate this is!

Notice, even these are just more thoughts that arise. *I am nothing, I am everything. I am nobody. I am somebody. Self, no self. Me, not me.* Just thoughts. What are these thoughts trying to capture?

Forget the words. Going on *present* evidence, what is clear?

Is it not clear that you are no-thing, that you are the empty space, the vast openness in which an entire cosmos arises? Yet because that spaciousness can in no way be separated from everything that arises, is it not clear that you are everything too?

Don't believe me. I don't want you to believe me. Come back to what's actually happening, right now.

*Tweet-tweet! Tweet-tweet!*

A bird sings. Aliveness dresses up as a bird singing, and as the one who hears the bird singing.

“Upon hearing the sound of the bell ringing,” the Zen master said, “there was no I, and no bell, just the ringing.”

No bird, no I, just the singing.

*And perhaps not even that.*