

# Standing as Awareness

## The Direct Path

GREG GOODE

Foreword by Jerry Katz

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STANDING AS AWARENESS

Revised edition

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## Foreword

*by Jerry Katz*

I first met Greg Goode when I started Nonduality.com and the Nonduality Salon discussion e-group in 1998. Everyone liked Greg, including the most intellectually unforgiving and the most enlightened.

Greg's an ordinary guy who treats everyone the same. He can speak of Richard Rorty's nondual philosophy and riding a bike with the same enthusiasm and affection.

I've met Greg at retreats a couple of times. I love how he explodes into laughter at something you said which you didn't think was so funny. Makes you wonder what he was really laughing at.

And I've seen tears roll down his eyes when talking to a group of people about the sweetness of awareness.

Ten years since we first met on the Internet, we were still involved with each other. When I was asked to co-organize the Science and Nonduality Conference for October, 2009, its scope required a partner. The first person I thought of was Greg Goode. He was invaluable in that role, bringing organization, understanding of what we were trying to accomplish, and knowledge of who's who. He was easy as pie to work with.

Describing "standing as awareness" as "free, light, weightless, uncrowded, unburdened, sweet and peacefully present," Greg describes himself.

If you want to become enlightened, you will be thankful for the direct path teaching as set forth here.

## Standing as Awareness

Greg starts this book with the bold and direct invitation to take your stand as awareness. From there Greg raises and hones in on questions you may not even know you have, all the while conversational about it:

“How does one take a stand as awareness?”

“What about pain?”

“I would like to have the same kind of enlightenment experience I read about others having.”

“At satsangs I’ve gotten very close to enlightenment, but then it seemed to go away.”

“Can you be attached to awareness?”

“Which teachings are true?”

Key to this book are simple experiments whose purpose is to expose experience as awareness. To do these experiments you need everyday objects in front of you, such as a table, cups, and your own body and senses.

Greg leads you from the experiential to deeper inquiry into what you consider yourself to be.

What’s powerful and new about this book is the degree of subtlety and discernment regarding seekers, teachers, satsang, inquiry, language.

Earlier I mentioned that Greg talks with passion about riding a bike. He rides a track bike. It’s ridden by racers and the best zen-like couriers. A track bike has no brakes.

The teaching here does not stop short, does not leave the smallest separation between experience and awareness. In your hands you hold a book with no brakes. You are invited to turn the page and begin pedaling.

Jerry Katz

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Editor, *One: Essential Writings on Nonduality*

## Preface

The book's title was chosen in recognition of one of the teachings from Sri Atmananda (Krishna Menon, 1883–1959), author of *Atma Darshan* and *Atma Nivriti*. By standing as awareness, you experience the world as awareness quite directly, without having to perfect anything or become anything.

This is a revised edition of the book, expanded from the edition that was published as an e-book in 2007. That edition was a book of dialogs from dinner conversations that took place between 1997 and 2005 in New York City at what are called “Nondual Dinners.” These gatherings, still taking place about once a month, were originally inspired by Francis Lucille when he began coming to New York City. He encouraged people to get together in friendship, love and openness as he (and before him Jean Klein) had done in Europe decades previously.

Francis and Jean, like myself, have been deeply influenced by Sri Atmananda's teaching. It is known as the “direct path,” which happens to be the same term that Ramana Maharshi applied to his teaching. In both cases, “direct” means “not progressive.” There is no need to progress closer and closer to the desired spiritual goal. One has always been at home there.

In the years since the book's initial publication, I received many comments and requests that boiled down to two issues. People wanted a more step-by-step unfolding

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of the teaching, and they wanted exercises, experiments or guided meditations.

Towards that end, I added three chapters. They cover the fundamentals of the direct path, such as how to take your stand as awareness, what happens when you fall in love with awareness, and how to conduct your exploration of awareness. The steps take you from the initial interest in the subject all the way to the peaceful collapse of the witness into pure consciousness. I also added several experiments in which you investigate various dualistic aspects of experience, and discover that your experience is simply undivided nondual awareness all along.

The presentation you are about to read could be shorter. And it could be longer. This one is the medium-size version!



## How to Stand as Awareness

What is awareness anyway?

**B**efore talking about standing as awareness, let's talk about awareness itself. Awareness sees what arises. Whatever appears, appears to awareness. In order for form, thought, feeling, sensation, time, space, unity and multiplicity to appear to awareness, awareness itself cannot be limited or defined by these factors. Awareness is the single subject of all objects. It is the formless that sees all form. It is the unseen seer.

Sometimes awareness is called consciousness. The two terms are synonymous in this teaching. Sometimes awareness is called being. This is to underscore that awareness is not nonexistence or voidness. Sometimes it is called knowledge. This is to convey that it is the antidote to ignorance. And sometimes awareness is called love. This is to emphasize its open, inviting, generous, intimate nature that is free from limitation and suffering.

You can experience your being as awareness easily. Whereas the teachings say that awareness is the seer of all that is seen, you experience seeing directly as happening in you. You never directly experience seeing to happen anywhere else. You don't even "see" seeing. It is much closer

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than that. It always feels as though it is happening *here*. It always feels like “I” am what is seeing.

Awareness sees, and I see. They are the same thing. Awareness *is* the “I”, or as Sri Atmananda calls it, the “I-principle.”

### Awareness is not an object

This leads to a realization that seems trivial now but will have transformational consequences later: since awareness or the I-principle is that which sees (since it is the subject of seeing), awareness itself cannot be seen. Awareness is not an object, but the subject. It is not the thing seen, but rather that which sees.

The reason that this will prove to be transformational is that will dissolve the seeking tendency that tries to objectify or behold awareness. If you hear that awareness is your nature, it then becomes quite natural for you to want to bring awareness up close and personal. You wish to zoom in on it before your mind’s eye, or to behold it in front of you as though it were sitting on a plate.

But awareness does not occur as an object. Sure, you can think of *concepts* of awareness, utter *terms* supposedly representative of awareness, or see artistic *renderings* of awareness. But notice that in each case, what is directly experienced is a concept, a word or a picture. Awareness itself hasn’t been captured. After all, even if you think about this in an everyday logical way outside the scope of nondual teachings, it makes sense: for there to be all these objects, there must be some subject for them to appear to. Why should the subject itself be able to be an object as well?

And then, if you think about this more deeply, it will make more sense – to examine something mentally or visually is what is done with *objects*; it can't be done to that which *sees objects*. You can't catch this seeing in the act. You can experience this inability at any time. Just try to see awareness itself, or perhaps do the Douglas Harding experiments. Each time, you will fail spectacularly!

The more this difference between objects and awareness sinks in, the less one tries to prove awareness through looking at something special. One no longer tries to keep awareness close, or grasp onto certain objects that are believed to be definitive of awareness. There is great liberation in this!

Awareness is always already there. It is infinitely closer than any concept, term or image. It is that open clarity within which these objects arise. It is that in which they subsist, and that into which they subside. It is present even when they are not. It is the open, loving spaciousness of YOU.

### Quick tour of standing as awareness

What if you took a stand, right now, as awareness? Sure, it can seem that “everything is awareness” is almost a cliché these days. But what if you really treated this pronouncement, this recent cliché, as true? Simply, you will discover that experience confirms your stand.

At the beginning of one's search, it certainly doesn't seem this way. It seems that experience is a very dualistic affair. Experience, we are taught early in life, has a personal inner observer who gets in touch with outer objects through the means of the senses, and communicates through language to other inner observers. There is an impassible barrier, we are taught, between *in* and *out*.

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Many years of this cultural conditioning makes this inner-observer model feel so convincing that it is rarely questioned. This way of experiencing corresponds to a stand taken as the gross body. You feel as if you're the observer beholding a world outside. As intimately related to a physical object (i.e., the gross body), you naturally experience the world as a large collection of physical objects.

If you stand as awareness, however, the world will be experienced as awareness itself. Experience will no longer be felt as a dualistic affair. It won't seem as though experience is of anything or centralized anywhere. "Experience," as a word used by teachers of the direct path, is a synonym for awareness itself.

### How your stand determines your experience

Experience usually seems dualistic, divided into an experiencer (subject) and that which is experienced (the object). This subject/object duality is perhaps the most fundamental duality of all. The two sides are related to each other. How you see yourself affects how you see the object of your experience. "What you be" determines what you see. And vice versa.

And yet not all of your experience seems split up into this dualism. There are many times such as being "in the zone," caught up in a beautiful sunset or exciting movie, or being in deep sleep, when there is no subject/object gap felt whatsoever. At these times you stand as the zone, or the flow or the sunset or movie itself, which is another way of saying that you were standing as awareness.

Throughout the day, throughout life, you stand as different things. This "standing" isn't necessarily something

you do or necessarily the outcome of a decision or commitment. “Standing” characterizes the relationship between you and what you experience.

### *When you stand as body, you experience bodies*

This is when it seems that your “I” is the body itself or in the material body. What you experience seems to be a world of other material bodies, both inert and alive.

### *When you stand as mind, you experience minds*

This is when it seems that your “I” is the mind or in the mind. What you experience seems to be a world of other minds and flowing energies making up the phenomenal world. Even those times when you look back at one of those timeless and gapless moments and say that it was “really” a psychological quirk – saying that, you are standing as mind.

### *When you stand as awareness, awareness is your experience*

This is when either (a) the objects you witness don’t seem like bodies, minds, particles, relations or any kind of entity at all, but merely appearances in awareness. They don’t signify or refer to anything outside of experience, or inside experience either, for that matter. This is the higher witness. Or (b) when you don’t experience objects or appearances at all, but rather awareness or consciousness is self-luminously shining. This is when the witness has dissolved or collapsed into pure consciousness.

How do you do it?

You can start by acknowledging that during a given 24-hour period, you stand as awareness much of the time already,

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such as during those moments mentioned earlier when there is no experienced subject/object gap. These times account for much more of the day than you might think, especially if you include deep sleep.

Even during the other times, when it seems that you experience a world of physical and mental objects, you can take some time to notice the parallels between “I” and awareness. These are the parallels between (a) that which experiences, and (b) consciousness. The self that experiences doesn’t perceive consciousness, and consciousness doesn’t perceive the self. Neither has shape, color or location. Both are directly experienced as subjects, not objects. They are the same thing, and are what all objects appear to.

So the “I” JUST IS awareness. Sri Atmananda calls the self “the I-principle.” Taking advantage of this insight, you can take your stand as follows. “OK then, so what goes for awareness goes for me.” What follows from this, when deeply seen, will transform your experience.

- Awareness doesn’t suffer; neither do I.
- Awareness doesn’t come and go; neither do I.
- Awareness is open and spacious; so am I.
- There are no limits, edges or borders to awareness; none to me either.
- Awareness is present during the presence of objects, during the absence of objects and beyond all objects; so am I.

Based on these insights, your experience will begin to verify the stand you have taken. Asserting your stand is like claiming your birthright. It is like coming home after a journey.

You acknowledge, “I am home – as awareness. We are the same thing!” It needn’t seem presumptuous, since you can’t be wrong about it.

### *Experiment with being awareness*

To get a taste of being awareness, here’s something you can do at any time during the day or night. Take a moment and just be, without preconceived notions, even notions about awareness. Don’t be a body or mind. Don’t take yourself as anything at all. And just openly notice how images and appearances and even gestalts and points of view come and go. Check to see whether you have the experience that YOU come and go. Or do you as witnessing awareness remain perfectly and peacefully present and unmoving, clear and open?

### Confirmation

Taking a stand as awareness is not cheating. It is not a case of spiritual bypassing or claiming something you haven’t earned. It is more like stepping into the living room of your own home. And there are many pointers that confirm the stand you take as awareness. And if you happen to fall in love with awareness, you will find even more confirmation.

Amazingly, one confirmation comes through language! This is amazing because language is often thought to be a barrier or a block to an experience of the truth. But when you stand as awareness, language actually becomes transformed into a confirmation of your stand.

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For example, you come to see that all words point to awareness. Nouns refer not to things, but directly to awareness because (a) awareness is the nature of all things, and (b) awareness is the only thing actually touched, or pointed to or referred to by words. It is all that is available to refer to – you simply can't find any other referents. Verbs express awareness, one might say, by "I-ing." Pronouns also point directly to awareness. "You," "I," "she," "he," "we," and "they" also point directly there in the same way that nouns do.

When you say "I," it emerges from awareness and also refers back to awareness, which is how it truly refers. Even the very thought "I" points to awareness by vanishing as thoughts do into awareness. This I is not personal. It is not your I or Greg's I. No one can have a separate I since there is no way to divide awareness.

You come to see that no one has a more direct relationship to "I" than anyone else. Rather, you and others and everything are all this I-principle, which is awareness itself. Bodies and borders and divisions that you'd normally think separate one thing from another are all this selfsame awareness, which is nothing other than I. Even the seemingly painful events of stubbing your toe or going to the dentist are nothing other than pure experience, awareness, the I-principle. These events are all empty of truly being anything else.

This is the nature of direct experience. Free, unbordered, undivided and peaceful. Everything is just like this.