

# Awakening Into Life

*Select writings on the nature of Self-realization*

~ From the Heart of Bradley

# Awakening Into Life

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## **A brief introduction.**

This self-published collection of writings is meant to serve as a companion to Bradley's "Sitting in Truth" series. It highlights, in several different ways, the essential underlying nature of being – and how we can arrive at a direct, experiential understanding of our own true nature as this beingness for ourselves.

"Sitting in Truth" is a series of weekly meditations, presentations, and dialogues that reflect a mature, heart-centered approach to spiritual exploration; offering true inner freedom. Bradley's primary emphasis is on "clearing the mind, opening the heart, and realizing the Truth of who and what you are" – echoing the sentiments of India's ancient Vedic masters, the teachings of the Buddha, the words of Christ, and the guidance all those who have touched the deepest part of themselves as pure awareness, beingness, and bliss; empty of an independent self-nature; at One with, and inseparable from, the harmony and flow of Absolute reality.

It should be noted that Bradley holds no particular religious viewpoint, does not advocate any particular philosophy, and has no particular interest in most of today's mainstream spiritual belief systems. His only priority is the mind – to watch it, look deeply into it, and realize the spaciousness beyond it. He does not espouse common 'new age' viewpoints on things like energy, vibration, or manifesting desires; angels, spirit guides, or traveling to alternate realities. His only goal is to dismantle everything that keeps one from realizing his or her own true nature – *"stripping away all that is untrue until the seeker of truth dissolves into Truth itself and awakens from the dream of duality"*. That being said, all earnest spiritual seekers, regardless of the path they find themselves on, have the potential to benefit greatly from what is being expressed here.

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***"If there is one thing that I can say to the spiritual seeker within, and hope that I am heard, it is this – there is nothing to seek! There is nowhere to go but here; nothing to do but this; no one to be but you. And yet it is quite clear to me that this lesson is the most difficult one to accept. The seeker has fallen for the most subtle trick of the mind – the story of 'other than!' "Other than this, other than here, other than now" – and seeks to find a way out. And yet it is the seeker that we must ultimately find our way clear of, because it is the seeker that eventually proves itself to be false.***

***Just know that wherever you are in your life right now, no matter what your self-concept may be, you are exactly where you are supposed to be, doing exactly what you are supposed to be doing. Whatever stories you may be telling yourself within your perceptual experience of mind, the truth of reality is expressing itself through you, as you, right here, right now – it always has been and always will.***

***Your path is your path - wherever it may lead. If it leads you to me, then let us sit as equals, determine why, and unwrap the gift together... If you start with where you are, investigate your experience with absolute sincerity, and work within yourself to free yourself from yourself, you will see for yourself – you are already that which you seek."***

***~From the Heart of Bradley.***

# Awakening Into Life

Select writing on the nature of Self-realization

‘From the Heart of Bradley’

[1<sup>st</sup> Draft (1.1)]

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## **The Truth, offered up front.**

There are no teachings. There is no teacher. And yet here we are. So I teach by being and I teach by teaching being. It is really quite simple – just be – that is all. And yet for most it is not enough. For realization to occur ‘work’ must be done. So I say “know mind as mind, nothing more is needed unless you ‘think’ it is”. For many, this is still not enough. ‘How to know’ becomes the next question – and so I offer these five things:

1. Love yourself, trust yourself, and honor your own journey,
2. Practice mindfulness and meditation,
3. Learn to face and let go of your pain,
4. Pay attention to synchronicity,
5. And be wary of your traps.

From here some still wish for more – they put forward their own spiritual models, notions, and conceptions in an effort to find validation for them – to which I say ‘waste as much time as you need’. Much of the spiritual work being done by the seeker is to entertain and exhaust the ego – to ultimately burn it up, and to put it out. It is all happening of its own accord anyway – that you still see yourself as a person on a journey, trying to get somewhere, with a separate sense of self that is identified with the limited ‘I’ of body-mind phenomena, is just an appearance in the mind. This appearance arises out of being – as its own expression of being – serving the purpose of being – which brings us right back to the beginning of the circle – just be – that is all.

The Truth remains the Truth whether we have experienced it as the Truth or not. Direct experiential realization just makes it easier to relax into what is present here, now, in this moment, from one beautiful unfolding moment into the next, no matter what the moment may contain. Here, one dwells in the spaciousness beyond mind, as a being of infinite love, in harmony with the perfection of all things as they are, flowing as one with the effortless way of being; moving through the world with love, kindness, generosity, gratitude, grace, forgiveness, patience, compassion, and acceptance; empty of self, but filled with the presence of being – residing in the Self as the Self – silent, still, and quiet – even amidst the noise and chaos of the world that appears to our senses.

There is more – and there is less. Less is always better. All answers are found in simplicity. Just be – this is the essence of simplicity expressing itself. So I teach by being and I teach by teaching being.

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## **All paths are equally beautiful.**

With so many spiritual paths, mystical traditions, and religious belief systems vying for our attention, how is one to know whether this path or that path, this tradition or that tradition, this religion or that religion, is the right one? Is there even such a thing? Indeed, those who find themselves ardently walking a particular road are likely to espouse there's as the ultimate road – the ultimate truth.

In my own teachings, I talk quite a bit about the importance of honoring our own unique journeys. I also talk about every path, tradition, and belief as 'rungs on a ladder' that ultimately lead us beyond ourselves and back home to our true nature – to the immediacy and intimacy of the present moment. That the now, the Self, and the self are all intrinsically one – and that the highest teaching is to stop climbing and burn the ladder; to accept ourselves fully and completely, just as we are – already whole and complete; perfectly imperfect. But how is this any different from what anyone else is saying?

Honestly, it's not. Every path, tradition, and religion is pointing to the same fundamental Truth. The only question is whether or not we are able to fully recognize the wordless inner expression of this Truth within ourselves. One of the things that makes Self-realization, non-duality, and the embodiment of awakening so alive is that everything we encounter is through our own direct experience – it's not passed on, transmitted, or transferred. There may indeed be some of this occurring – but it's all just pointing you inward to that you can see the Truth clearly for yourself.

The other interesting aspect of these experiential shifts in perception and consciousness is that they can run in parallel to our existing belief systems. In other words, they do not force us to abandon what we are most drawn to within a particular path, tradition or religion. When we can learn to be comfortable with paradox, ambiguity, and uncertainty, we don't need to push anything away – and we can invite everything in – including a direct path to realizing who and what we truly are, while also playing out the spiritual role or spiritual identity that emerges as a part of this process.

In other words, Truth, as the Absolute reality is, by its very nature, inclusive of all that is relative and not separate or apart from any aspect of itself. Even the appearance of separation, within the context and confines of our human experience, is a function of the whole; as are all of the various ways that we seek to resolve this false sense of separation – by whatever means of exploration might be available to us. So I say that if you are Christian, these teachings will draw you more deeply into the heart of Christ. If you are a Buddhist, they will draw you more deeply into the wisdom of Buddha. And so on... Be who you are, believe what you must, examine what you will... and let Love guide the way.

The rest will take care of itself.

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## **An experience of awakening.**

Many people, because they have not actually experienced it for themselves, misunderstand the nature of what a true and authentic spiritual awakening really is. Some would argue that there are actually many 'varieties' of awakening – so perhaps an explanation, of sorts will help. Not as something to be grabbed and clung to as a new concept, but as a way to shift our perceptions of what we 'think' it is.

You, as a human being, are a beautiful expression of consciousness; a vehicle of expression that makes our experience of being possible within the presence of being. And yet you are a dream within a dream; completely unaware of your own true nature. You may go through your whole life seeing yourself as a separate individual who stands apart from the whole; living it all out from the position of the mind.

However, there is something far deeper within you, something that cannot be put into words. We may refer to it as a sleeping giant – something angelic, innocent, untouchable by the world. Something that is beyond all words, concepts, and ideas. All models and notions. It sleeps within you, expressing what you would call 'yourself', as a shadow of its own true nature – 'you', as you see yourself, are its dream.

You, as you take yourself to be, are not really here. You never really were. You were a dream state that occupied the mental-construct called 'mind'. The mirror self. The reflection. When awakening occurs, it is not the dream that awakens – in other words, 'you' do not awaken. The dreamer awakens out of the dream. At which point, the dreamer and the dream encounter each other for the first time.

The dreamer is beyond love, beyond patience, beyond beauty. Beyond anything and everything that your mind can possibly imagine, because it does not exist in a way that the mind can grasp or explain. It is I, before I becomes 'I'. It is the inclusive ME that has no exclusive me. We rest within it, and it lives within us – with no borders or boundaries to be found anywhere. It is the great weave of beingness.

So as it wakes up within the vessel of itself, and encounters the egoic mirror of itself, it must begin working to polish that mirror. It begins using everything at its disposal to do exactly that. All of your inner and outer experiences are shifted in the direction of a great undoing of what has been done. All to cleanse the mirror of the mind of its learning, knowledge, views, beliefs, opinions, and preferences.

Eventually, awareness leads to acceptance. Acceptance leads to surrender. Surrender leads to silence. And silence reveals the truth. By this point the mirror is clean enough for the egoic, mind-made, conceptual self to leave the dream, by dying into the dreamer; who is now awake. But the transition, at this stage, is so subtle as to be next to nonexistent; because the dreamer and dream were always One.

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## **You are beyond 'infinite'.**

Someone asked me the other day – “how do you know that you are infinite? I mean, really, how do you know?”

The answer demands that we ask a more fundamental question, beginning at the base of 'I'. That is the border – the boundary between what you are, and what you 'think' you are. What you 'think' you are is a person; 'some-one', who must be doing 'some-thing'. This is just a thought. That you are 'finite' is just a thought. You see, 'finite' is a word. Words are used to paint pictures that convey meaning.

Meaning is partly perception, partly inception, partly imagination; but mostly memory; and all story... So if I hand you a word that we would refer to as 'finite' – you might leap to your definition of the word 'limited' – or choose some other comparative notion within the conditioned framework of 'thought', and contrast it against a background of opinions and preferences; which are also just thoughts.

Using thoughts to interact with thoughts; within the net of confusion that we call 'mind', we get tangled up in them. We begin to drown in them – and we lose ourselves to them. This is, of course, quite natural. It is the way of things – an aspect of the Great Way – or the Tao – or the Universe – or God. We can call it whatever we like. There is a beingness beyond our beingness of which we are all a part. We are woven into it, and it expresses itself as us.

We are beyond words – something that exists just beyond the edges of our conditioned states of consciousness. States like 'thought'. Or rather – states of mind. But no matter how deeply we may choose to explore our Absolute nature – or attempt to penetrate the deepest seas of enlightened activity; at some point you're going to have to let go of that too. We must become quiet.

But now, that's all part of the fun. Learning to pay attention. Seeing how miserable you are. Looking really deeply at why you are so miserable. Realizing that your thoughts are problematic; trying to control them. And eventually, through a combination of synchronicity, personal miracles, and abiding awareness; we realize that we're still stuck.

Waking up isn't about putting an end to your misery. A mature spiritual understanding is inclusive of learning how the mind works; cultivating a 'sense' of loving non-judgmental awareness; being in complete acceptance of your 'self' at every perceivable level; and offering yourself in loving surrender to your Self. Instead of dwelling in the mind; the playground of thought – we reside in Being.

And we witness the perfection of creation as this divine harmony of motion plays itself out in the direction of Love. We recognize ourselves as but singular notes within this great harmony. The 'I' that remains as the root of 'personal' uniqueness is but an instrument of its own karmic tune. It plays a vital role within the expression of duality – that is, itself the purpose of this reality.

One need not be so concerned about long held verbal or visual beliefs; ideas like 'space', 'time', 'consciousness', 'love', 'god', 'self', 'good', 'bad', 'right', 'wrong' – all the stuff of judgment and confused reactive models of behavior that are, themselves emanating out of the Absolute that you are. This is where the Self and the self merge.

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Here, we need to go back to that central theme of 'I'. If you look at 'I' as a doorway between Self and self; then picture this doorway – on one side of it; you are the infinite, ageless, timeless expanse of well – words really... And on the other side of it – you are just you doing you. Here you are – as the Self, squeezed into the self; trying to find the Self. And, of course, you ARE the Self.

Whatever is happening; right now; for you; is perfectly in harmony with itself. Just abide in it – from a position of non-judgmental loving awareness; and invite it in to break your heart. Then, notice just how infinite the capacity of your heart really is. See through the eyes of wise, loving surrender, into everything as your Self; and give it whatever outpouring of love your heart calls you to endure.

But let it begin with you... Our vast oceans of love are best understood when we learn to swim in them first ourselves. We have to turn the tremendous force of Love inward, rather than outward, as we work to teach others how to swim; by whatever modality we have been drawn to. As this Love consumes you; you become the experience of it in the lives of others. You learn to see how Love moves.

This manner of Love is NOT a thought – it does not exist in the mind. It has no relative comparative quality that we can assign to it; because it isn't a quality – and cannot be compared by qualitative means. It is, quite simply, 'the movement of things'. It does not ask for anything – it does not need anything. It does not claim anything – it exercises great wisdom in how it operates itself.

Wise, patient, and compassionate. These are realized to be core qualities of our essential nature. Silent, still, and quiet. Both directly and indirectly engaged in the pure doing of nothing; as it appears within the presence of being that expresses itself through us. Sitting between two worlds, as a dualistic experience of nondual reality; that was born to serve the needs of Love.

All things in this universe are love given form to serve a purpose. We ourselves are love given form to serve a purpose. Our purpose is to be love. It is to move, through this world, with love and kindness; generosity, gratitude, and grace; with forgiveness as the mechanism by which we embrace one another, patience as the ever-steady state of our being, and compassion as how we hold it all in our hearts.

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## Know mind as mind.

We are born into this world, conditioned by external influences to perceive the world a certain way, live our lives in accord with these conditioned views, and then we die. Notice here the emphasis on conditioning that is present between birth and death – what we call our experience of life. This conditioning is the root cause of misperception – which is the root cause of all suffering.

Here we will focus on the basics of our conditioned notions; the play of thought and the presence of mind – and our tendency toward identification with the body-mind experience. It's all very innocent quite frankly – a function of nature if you will. Something that we will explore more fully in our discussion regarding non-duality. But this is the heart of the matter – or at least a good place to start.

When we are born into this world, we are born with a clean slate, with a clear mind. It is the first time that a parent says to us, 'this is your foot', 'this is your nose', 'this is a bowl', 'this is a kite', 'this is right' and 'this is wrong' – that is when our conditioning begins. It continues with family and friends, school and work, television and media. Every social interaction that we have, over the course of our lives, adds another layer of conditioning.

Eventually, all of these layers of conditioning give rise to the egoic manifestation of an 'I am'; that is not. We begin to believe that we are 'someone' who must be doing 'something' – and in this we find ourselves lost. Lost in words, concepts and ideas; models and notions; stories and beliefs. A mind-made conceptual reality that reflects the qualities of mind that we've chosen to adopt as a result of our conditioning.

It's actually quite fascinating to see just how entrapped and enmeshed in our thoughts we really are. Constantly taking every external input, cataloguing it against an internal frame of reference, and giving it meaning based on the stories we tell ourselves; all in an effort to make sense of, and to control, our experience of life. That we choose to believe what our minds tell us is a form of insanity – but since we all do it – it's considered 'normal'.

Or, is what we perceive as 'normal' simply another aspect of our conditioning? What is 'normal' these days anyway? What kinds of things do we tend to agree on? What are the collective social stories that we are telling ourselves so that we can find some sort of safety and comfort in the world? Is it possible that even our most fundamental beliefs; our very notions of 'self' and 'other' are somehow misinformed by the collective, perceptive ignorance of humanity as a whole?

Let us consider for a moment the nature of a 'chair'. We look at a chair and we see a chair because we call it a chair and we know what a chair is for – we have assigned the value of 'chairness' to it. And yet, could you sit in front of it and place things upon it, using it as a table? Could you stand on it and call it a ladder? Could you put one on top of another and call it art? Could you toss one in the air and make a child smile? Could you melt the chair down and turn it into something else entirely?

What was the chair a thousand years ago and what will the chair be a thousand years from now? Is it still just a chair? What is the chair if we stop assigning the value of chairness to it? What happens if, instead of seeing a 'chair', we see a unique, distinct object with no story – just a form? Does the form now serve a purpose, or represent the potentiality to serve a purpose? To serve any possible purpose imaginable. Suddenly, that which we once called a 'chair' becomes an infinite range of possibilities.

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Again, we'll revisit this and take it to another level as we step into our conversation about what non-duality is, but there is an important question to ask here as we expand our scenario a bit more. If your conditioning is what makes a chair a chair, then what about everything else that you've been conditioned to see a certain way, to label and give meaning to? To separate, isolate, and differentiate? A cup, a bowl, a clock, a flower, a bird, a human being? Even 'empty space'? Is it possible that it's all just a story?

We make so many assumptions without ever considering the basis for them. In fact, our entire experience of the world – each and every moment of our lives, is being experienced through a filter – the filter of duality. Through sense perception, we experience 'something', and the mind then reacts to that something with an immediate response that is, and can only be, a reflection of what has been formulated by the mind itself; a conceptual overlay of language, interpretation, and meaning that is based on our conditioning.

Now let us turn our attention back to the more challenging question of what this 'means' to you as a human being. When you began to learn about the world – as you were taught what things 'are', you were taught to identify yourself as a human being, a separate and distinct entity that is apart from everything else. You were taught how to be someone who must be doing something – and given a mission in life; a notion of how things 'should' be – and then you were set loose upon the world.

But if everything you tell yourself in your mind is a story; if you can understand how your perception and conditioning play together to create your experience of reality; why would this particular story – this means of identification – be any different? Are you really who you 'think' you are? Is the world really what you 'think' it is? Who would you be without this story? Who would you be without any stories? Who would you be if every story vanished into the silence, stillness, and quiet of your true being – or, if, at the very least, you stopped believing all of your stories?

## **Transcending the mind in stages.**

As we enter into any discussion regarding spiritual maturity, it is important to establish the context in which such discussions are occurring. This is, of course, extremely important when we enter into any discussion regarding the mind.

Many spiritual teachers, who emphasize the mind, will offer different teachings to different groups in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of our ultimate reality. But because these teachings are sometimes taken out of context, or presented in a piecemeal manner, a great deal of confusion may arise.

In this article, we will explore a progressive approach to developing the mind to the point where the mind itself is transcended. Using a basic model that is neither too simplistic, nor overly complex, we will focus on three basic stages of mental development that tilt one in the direction of self-realization. These three stages include awareness, discipline, and quieting of the mind.

### ***Awareness***

Awareness is achieved when one brings attention to the mind and begins paying attention to what the mind is doing. It can be quite an interesting experience indeed, when one first engages the mind from a position of awareness. In fact, the experience of it can be almost overwhelming. Most of us, absently participating in our daily lives, pay very little attention to our thoughts – where they come from, where they take us, etc. But by paying attention, we see the truly chaotic nature of our minds, and we realize just how little control we really have over the various mind states that appear.

This is the basic practice of mindfulness and the objective of most meditations – to create awareness of the mind states that appear and show us how our minds are actually operating. We open ourselves up to a field of awareness within which we can observe a thought arising, expressing itself, and falling away. In this stage there is no need to actually ‘do’ anything. Awareness is enough. Awareness alone reveals to us the nature of our confusion – it becomes quite clear that, with so much happening absentmindedly, it’s no wonder that we’ve found ourselves in mental distress. Awareness arouses within us a desire or willingness to pursue deeper inner examination.

### ***Discipline***

Disciplining the mind is not what it sounds like. Use of this term tends to summon up visions of a punishment and reward system used to obtain desired behavioral results. This is not what is meant here. To discipline the mind is to continue bringing our awareness to the mind states that are arising, but to use the opportunity of arising as an opportunity to free ourselves from what our thoughts are revealing about our own inner worlds. It also offers us an opportunity to redirect ourselves from negative mind states and cultivate positive ones.

At this stage, it is important that we be with our thoughts, examine them carefully, and work with them as needed. If we see patterns arising in thought, these patterns become a point of focus that we can begin to bring concentrated awareness to, examine with inner intensity and radical self-honesty, and, eventually free ourselves from their weight. It is these attributes: concentration, intensity, and self-

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honesty that will ultimately lead us to a place where we can let go of the thoughts that keeps us trapped in our illusory concept of self and see ourselves as we truly are.

## ***Quieting***

At a certain point, we begin to experience the space in between our thoughts. With greater ease and regularity, we are able to shift our awareness in ways that allow us to be with what is, without stirring the mind. Rather than being with our thoughts, or redirecting them, we instead learn to let them go entirely, bringing ourselves into the spaciousness between our thoughts, the spaciousness beyond the mind. Whenever we see thoughts arising, we bring ourselves back into quietude. Over and over again we set aside our thoughts, and let go of our association with the thinker.

Thought is largely unnecessary. One who is quite dependent on the mind may have difficulty with such a statement, but the absurdity of it is grounded in the deepest truth there is. As a part of this journey, somewhere along the way, the entire concept of self that is entertained in the mind is seen through and we begin to understand that there is no one here who can claim the mind. The mind is the creation of consciousness, and is a tool that ultimately reveals itself as false. A quiet mind is a peaceful mind – a loving mind. It is no longer seeking to prop itself up as the master, but instead becomes the servant.

## ***Transcendence***

As you can see, this progressive approach covers the most common methods used to tame the mind, but does so in a way that shows how each practice leads into the next, and how these practices become building blocks unto one another. In truth, this model offers very little real value. As with everything else that exists outside of you, it will fail you into yourself, until you become nothing, and then everything. Transcendence of the mind is not necessarily what we ‘think’ it is. It is actually surrender of the small self into the One Self.

Awareness reveals to us how little we truly know ourselves. Discipline is our effort to gain some sort of control over ourselves once we’ve acknowledge just how undisciplined our minds really are. Quieting is what happens as we see through the nature of thought itself and surrender into the mystery – the thinker dissolves into the clear waters of pure being, and disappears. It is the universal mind that is doing all of our thinking anyway – whether we understand this for ourselves or not, it is true; always, for each and every one of us, conscious or unconscious, accepting or in denial of it all.

Experienced as one of the most profound realizations we can attain, we eventually reach a point where we understand that transcendence does not necessarily mean that the minds states themselves disappear. What it means, in actuality, is that the one who lays claim to the mind, and the thoughts that occupy the mind, is transcended. That one knows that it is no one, and steps out of the way, so that the divine mind can make itself known, more directly, through the vessel of its own conscious projection into the dream world that we call reality.

Once this has occurred, one simply relaxes into The Self, and watches the movements that occur within consciousness, not caught up in them, not identifying with them; simply witnessing them dispassionately – not believing in them, not giving them any reality. You learn to become comfortable with the flow of consciousness as expressed within the presence of being called ‘you’; holding onto nothing and claiming nothing as your own.

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The whole process of life becomes a passing show; with people, places, and events playing themselves out within your field of now – with God as the doer of all things. You are made free by this knowing... Surrender and gratitude become your practice – and everything becomes sublimely beautiful. Such is the nature of liberation. May you find it for yourself; here, now, in this moment, through your own direct experience.

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## **Oneness and emptiness dancing together.**

As we deepen into our experience of being, there are many stages that we must pass through. Each time we pass through one of these stages, it opens us up in a way that allows us to move into the next stage – and the next, and the next, and the next. Or so it appears.

Several of these stages include a shedding of the self from different angles and perspectives. At first we must learn to let go of our egoic concept of self. Then we must see through all of the layers of separation and division that keep us trapped in a spiritual concept of self. Finally, we arrive at a stage of realization where we understand that there is no one home – no one at all.

Most people will have great difficulty understanding this concept with the rational mind. A mind that sees itself as real is still attached to its concept of self. A mind still attached to its concept of self cannot see beyond the concept that it is attached to. But the idea that we are someone is indeed a misconception that arises within a mind that is still attached to its own sense of self.

When we discipline the mind through concentration exercises, and we cultivate awareness of our mind states through the practice of mindfulness, we begin to see into our thoughts, through our thoughts, and past our thoughts. Eventually we are placed in a position where we must examine the arising of thought from a much different angle – from a place best described as beyond the mind.

Along the way, additional realizations of our true nature begin to coalesce into a fuller understanding of who and what it is that we truly are. One of these realizations manifests as the experience of synchronicity, which eventually reveals a deeper universal perfection that underlies synchronicity itself. We begin to see that the whole system is in harmony with itself – perfect in every way.

The realization of this innate perfection then begs the question... How does the law of universal perfection across a particular system allow for anything that is imperfect to arise within that system? At this point, one begins to see how actions – however perceived, and the thoughts that brought them forth into the world, must themselves be arising as perfect parts of the system.

Again, this is not an easy concept to wrap the rational mind around, but at deeper levels of experiential realization, one can no longer escape the truth of things as they are. The mind is but an injection point for the divine will of consciousness itself; and thought is one of the primary tools used to guide us on our journey – as a tooth on a gear that turns the clockwork universe in the direction of its own purpose.

Where are you in any of this? You are the ghost in the machine. The you that you think you are has no basis in reality. You are but a drop of conscious awareness in a sea of conscious awareness that is flowing as a stream of conscious awareness into and out of this thing that we experience as reality. There is no separation or division in any of it – there is just the presence of a loving conscious awareness in which all things happen.

With these intertwining realizations, one begins to see one's own innocence in the process of unfolding. We see that the process is not a personal one that applies to us, but rather is an impersonal process that applies to the system as a whole. It is we, attached to our concept of self and in resistance to the truth of things as they are, who struggle against the stream of consciousness and create our own suffering.

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But even this is perfect. Our suffering is the crack the light shines through, and it is through our perceived experience of suffering that we learn, grow, and progress into a profound state of unconditional love. This is the return to our true nature as beings of infinite love. Our suffering, and our freedom from suffering, are two dynamics that occur within form, to teach us how to love without conditions.

This is the evolution of consciousness itself. An entire system of consciousness that contains the whole of existence, in a state of absolute perfect harmony with itself, experiencing itself through a multitude of forms and formless states. A system that has infinite love for itself and infinite patience for the unfolding of its own divine plan; including our individual and collective roles within it – learning to love unconditionally.

If we can shift ourselves into the spaciousness beyond mind, return ourselves to our original state as beings of infinite love, and be in harmony with the perfection of all things as they are, then we begin to enter into the effortless way of being, or the great way of nondoing. Instead of doing, there is just being, and within being, all doing is done – harmoniously, without resistance.

Instead of losing ourselves in a trap of egoic consciousness, or a trap of spiritual identification, we find ourselves standing nowhere, doing nothing, being no one – and we are free. Free to dwell within the spaciousness beyond mind, as a being of infinite love, in harmony with the perfection of all things as they are, flowing, as one, with the effortless way of being.

At this level of realization, experientially arrived at in its fullness, all seemingly paradoxical aspects of this understanding disappear from view. There is no longer a need to question the mysterious nature of the beingness that exists beyond our being of which we are all a part, because we are it. There is no separation or division anywhere – we are the stream of consciousness, but there is no ‘we’ in any of it.

Oneness is the collapse of duality into the nondual, experienced at every level of our being, through the continuing process of self-realization. But oneness means just that – there is only one. Only The One. Expressing itself, experiencing itself, expanding itself, watching itself, being itself, playing with itself, learning from itself, etc. There is no you, no me, no us, no we. There is only The One.

# Awakening Into Life

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## **Standing inside of fear.**

Fear is the guardian of ignorance. Ignorance is the root of suffering. Most of us do not know what to do about our fears, so we allow them to dictate the shape of our lives – keeping us separate from the deepest truth of our own nature. However, if we can learn to stand inside of our fears, we can begin to master our fear responses and move deeper into ourselves, revealing that which is hidden from view.

The journey into and beyond the concept of enlightenment is, among other things, a journey of fear, bravery, love, acceptance, and surrender that plays out over and over and over again, until we have shed enough of our fear to fully accept the truth of who and what we are – leading to the ultimate surrender of the illusory self into the stream of consciousness from which all things arise.

This is not the same as awakening, it is the end game of the awakening process. Awakening is an invitation to step into the truth of our oneness, but it requires us to deepen into the awakened experience to fully understand what it is that we have stepped into. This is why so much of what arises within the awakened experience is so challenging, if your path includes true liberation.

The journey into the experience of no self is not an easy journey to take – which is why so few find their way into it. The road to liberation has many distractions – fear is one of these. In fact, almost all spiritual traps can, in one or more ways, be tied back into a particular aspect or facet of fear. The fear of missing out on something better, the fear of doing something wrong, even the fear of fear itself.

To better understand this mechanism, we must recognize that fear comes in two primary flavors, with many varying levels of subtlety between them and around them...

One is the bio-physiological process of reacting to an immediate physical threat. For instance, a snake jumping out of the bushes, lunging at you. This event engages the innate fight or flight system that has allowed human beings to survive thus far. There is nothing wrong with this type of fear. It is a part of our natural response system as biological entities experiencing a perceptual reality.

The other kind of fear, emotional fear, is the fear that traps us in separation and division. This is the fear that we encounter within ourselves as certain thought-forms arise within the confusion of the conditioned mind. It is ego-generated fear used as a protective blanket to keep us safe from the pains of our past and from the potential reemergence of that pain in a projected, imaginary future.

When emotional fear arises within us it becomes an all-consuming cloud of darkness that blinds us to our way out of it; much like a sandstorm that never ends. Because we tend to hide from our fears, the darkness just gets deeper, darker, harder to perceive, and harder to escape. Layer upon layer of fear isolates us from ourselves, from each other, and from the essence of our being.

The only way out is to stop running. One must learn to look deeply into the self in order to find the light that will illuminate the darkness and dislodge the roots of fear that keep us trapped. As we strip away each layer of accumulated fear, new realizations arise, and the veil of ignorance becomes a bit thinner. With each new level of surrender, we learn to shine our light more brightly – and more fear is revealed.

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Eventually there is no darkness remaining; nothing left to fear. There is only the light, shining brightly – leading us into the spaciousness beyond the mind where we return to our true nature as beings of infinite love; able to live in harmony with the perfection of all things as they are, flowing, as one, with the effortless way of being. This is the hallmark of true self-mastery.

The journey into, through, and beyond our fears, can be taken in many different ways, for there are many different methods. The method described here includes five dimensions of exploration that work together as one; learning to love and trust ourselves and honor our own journey, to practice mindfulness and meditation, to face and let go of our pain, to pay attention to synchronicity, and to be wary of our traps.

These steps, when taken with radical inner-intensity and radical self-honesty, lay the groundwork for the final stages of transformation. By this point, the patterns of progression are clear – the true purpose of suffering has been fully revealed as the gift that leads us home, back into ourselves, back into the one self, and finally, beyond all notions of self entirely. Yes, even fear is a gift that tilts us toward liberation.

Fear is not the enemy – nor is it your friend. It is simply the perfect harmony of motion playing itself out – drawing the version of you that believes it is someone deeper into the play between form and formless, between being and nonbeing, between existence and non-existence. Fear leads to freedom once it is seen through and no longer guards the veil of ignorance from your prying eyes.

But you must learn to stand in it first... to stand inside your fear, unflinching and unyielding. It is the only way home...

# Awakening Into Life

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## The Metaphor of the Mountain.

Let us imagine for a moment, that the spiritual journey is very much like climbing a mountain – and that we can break the journey down into three distinct parts; going up the mountain, seeing the view from the top, and coming back down the mountain again.

Climbing up the mountain, there are many different paths that we can take; there are many different ways that we can go. Each and every one of these paths is an equally valid way to reach the top. If the top of the mountain is the only real goal, does it matter which path we take?

And what is at the top of the mountain? Freedom. Freedom is at the top of the mountain. Liberation. Enlightenment. Whatever word we want to insert here. Whatever word you want to use. Whatever the top of the mountain is for you. That's what's at the top of the mountain.

And so you take whatever path you are meant to take; the path that takes you to the top of the mountain. All paths are going to get you there, no matter which path you choose. You can't get it wrong – there is no wrong path to take. They all lead to the same place.

Even if your path just goes around and around the base of the mountain for a while, until you notice that you're stuck at the same elevation; or you stumble and fall along the way; or you get lost, confused, or afraid. It's all just fine – eventually you'll find your way again. Up, up, up the mountain.

And so we finally arrive at the top of the mountain – exhausted by the climb. From the top of the mountain, we finally see. But the view is not at all what we expected it to be. There are no words to describe it, because there is literally nothing to see. It is empty; absent of all descriptive qualities.

We see through our own direct experience the vast, spacious, emptiness; the silence, stillness and quiet; the void of pure being. Something so precious and sacred – and so impossible to describe that all of these words fail to touch it – no matter how clearly they may be pointing to it.

We witness the interwoven fabric of our being – beyond the mind; beyond our conceptual notion of self; beyond our conceptual notion of the world. There is a complete falling away of the 'I, me, mine' that we have been entrapped within; and a deep surrender into a mystery that is beyond all comprehension.

We disappear into that which we have always been; the totality of all existence. Not just what we perceive, but as that which perceives – or rather, that which is behind and beyond all perceiving. That which permeates and animates every aspect of our existence; our perceptual reality; our very lives.

We realize that we've always had it backwards. We are not living our lives. Life is living us. Life is what we are. We are the awareness, that gives rise to consciousness, that gives rise to perception, that makes the experience of life possible. And it is all of one essential essence – the harmony of love.

These are just a few of the things we see from the top. And yet none of these descriptions is inherently true – they are all just pointers to the inexplicable, unfathomable nature of the Self that is realized when the Truth wakes up within us – when we finally arrive at the top of the mountain.

## Awakening Into Life

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For many people, this is what enlightenment is – to reach the top of the mountain; to arrive at full realization of the Self. We are finally free of our pain, suffering, and misery. We are finally able to bask in the love, joy, and bliss of pure being. We are liberated from the world – we have transcended.

The thing is, that this conceptual notion of what we think enlightenment is, is just another mind made notion that has nothing at all to do with reality. Yes, we can disappear into this state of being – if that is indeed what Truth would have of us; but this is not the end of the road. It is not the end of the journey.

The experience of enlightenment is not itself enlightenment. Enlightenment is the transcendence of all experience, including the experience of enlightenment itself. Enlightenment has nothing at all to do with experience – it is about knowing ourselves as the awareness that experiences.

It is to watch the coming and going of all experience from the position of awareness – without identifying with what comes and goes, including the coming and going of identification. This realization is where we begin to come back down the mountain again – into our humanity.

At the top of the mountain, when we witnessed the falling away of the self, and surrendered the remainder to the loving intelligent awareness that moves all things in the direction of its own purpose, we saw clearly that our lives are not our own; that we are but notes within a great harmony of motion.

With this knowledge and releasing of identification with the body-mind experience as ‘my’ body, as ‘my’ mind, we are freed from the weight of ‘our’ suffering; and yet suffering remains. Everything that was present before we began the journey remains exactly as it was. The experience itself is unchanged.

As you come back down the mountain, it is your perception of experience that has changed, not the nature of experience itself. You yourself, are now beyond experience – no longer tied to the temporal flux of linear existence; or attached to any aspect of your experience, including nonattachment.

And yet you are also completely present within your awareness of all experience – aware of awareness. You are at peace with the coming and going of all phenomenal experience; even the coming and going of peace itself. You know that you are the dance of Life and need not concern yourself with anything.

Your definition of enlightenment is no longer one of perfection, but one that embraces the perfection of our imperfection. You see beyond the notional boundaries of self and other; and partake of the totality – the entirety of existence that is the one body of the one consciousness that you truly are.

Coming further and further down the mountain, and back into the beautiful miracle of our humanity, you set aside all notions of duality and separateness. You see through the dividing line between the absolute and the relative, and you know that the relative is the absolute in full expression.

You learn to embrace it all. You learn to appreciate it all. You learn to love it all. You stop concerning yourself with ‘this’ and ‘that’ and begin to allow for everything. You invite it all into yourself – using every moment of your life as an opportunity to deepen into the Life that you are.

## Awakening Into Life

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Eventually even this fades – into ordinary everyday life. You finally arrive at that place where you accept, beyond all doubt, that an extraordinary life is an ordinary life lived with great love. But you are no longer caught up in trying to be loving – for you know yourself to be Love itself.

Once more standing at the base of the mountain, with nowhere left to go and nothing left to see, you dwell within the spaciousness beyond the mind; as a being of infinite love; in harmony with the perfection of all things, as they are; flowing as one with the effortless way of being.

You go back out into the world – follow the calling of your heart – and live your life...

...and that's really all there is to it.

## Awakening Into Life

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### **A few brief words with the master.**

The master sits up strait, legs crossed, eyes closed, dwelling in peaceful bliss. A staff extends across his legs, a cup sits by his side, and in front of him is a small sign that says “sharing the secrets of enlightenment”. The city corner that he sits on is bristling with activity. A young man, walking by, notices him and sits down.

Q. Sir, they say that you are an enlightened one; peaceful, wise, and radiant with love. I have come to sit and listen – to hear you tell me what enlightenment is so that I can find it for myself. Will you teach me the way?

A. I will sit and speak with you of course, but no one can actually teach you the way. You must find it within yourself as the result of your own experiential realization. I do not teach. I simply exist as the spaciousness that allows others to remember what they have forgotten. What questions do you have?

Q. What is enlightenment? I have heard many stories – and there are so many teachers and teachings, each with their own definition and way to reach it. Tell me what it is please.

A. What you hear are the many voices of the one speaking about itself to those who require different avenues of understanding. Truth is subjective – all truths are true until there is no further need for truth. Enlightenment is the ceasing of all questions, the letting go all wants and desires; the end of running and chasing. It is the abandonment of fear and doubt. It is to remove oneself from the world by seeing the world for what it truly is.

Q. What is the world?

A. The world is your mind playing a trick on you.

Q. Many beings have said similar things, but this does not help explain to me what enlightenment is.

A. It is both everything and nothing at the very same time. Once you have realized it, you understand that you were always it. Enlightenment is not something you find, it is something that is returned to you. It is a return to your innocence, to your wholeness, to the beginners mind. It is the experience of you without the stories of who you’ think’ you are.

# Awakening Into Life

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## Into the Heart of Being.

Many people ask questions about how I live my own life. It's quite simple – I truly practice everything I speak on, this is my true expression of life.

I have learned to surrender completely to the intimacy of each moment – regardless of its content, and dwell deeply in a place of heart-based nonjudgmental awareness. I practice a form of mindfulness that is best expressed as an ongoing experience of heart-breath awareness.

This place is deep, loving, compassionate, and patient beyond measure. It receives 'me' before any other – squaring away something that is untouchable by any outer influence. It is I, before I becomes 'I'. It is the inclusive ME that has no exclusive me. I rest within it, and it lives through me – and I need not understand much more.

There is something always impenetrable beyond the edges of 'this' or 'that' – still held in the remnant of what was. Which, when recognized, is always the moment the light sees itself, and cancels itself out. In that moment 'I' drops back away into a non-referential spaciousness that rests just beneath the use of words, concepts, and ideas; models and notions.

I question very little – even when I appear to be questioning. I see great beauty in the nature of all questions, and the questioner; the one always trying to understand. From this place I just lean back and surrender into the flow of what 'is'. I watch it all. When I watch myself begin to run off a cliff – I am aware that I am running off of a cliff; but in my acceptance of all things as they are, I will run off the cliff, if that is indeed the direction of things. And I will do so with a joyous heart.

What I am has very little to do with the body, or the mind, and so it is free to experience what it must experience while it does its work. Within the framework of my bound mind, I strive, sincerely and in full earnestness, to live a life of wisdom, patience, and compassion – a chorus that I draw deeply from, in all that I find myself engaged in. I see my whole life as a learning ground, paying careful attention to each scrape and bruise; but not giving them up to past, future, or even meaning. Just being with them as they arise, and watching them go when they depart. Seeing how they unfold into the next story.

Nothing is what it appears to be – and this becomes a blatantly obvious curiosity within the experience of being. The mind is a great trickster with many beautiful lessons to teach. The heart is something beyond 'beyond'. At some point the mind becomes a shadow of the heart – and then the two encircle one another in an endless void; emerging in silence, stillness, and quiet; empty of self, but filled with the presence of being – the holy spirit – or whatever term you choose to color it with. There is no need to give it a name or a dimension – because that my dears is the joke.

Amidst all of this inner beauty, is an even larger recognition of, and heartfelt appreciation for, each and every beautiful unfolding moment, from one moment, into the next. I find that the whole universe is embracing me with every moment I surrender into, and leveraging my willingness – or the lovely appearance of willingness, as an example of itself in operation. This I cannot explain in much more detail – there is a line that cannot be crossed in words. One must experience what we all speak and write on, before one can truly understand it. And even then...

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## **An assortment of short quotes.**

Do not ask me how I know the things that I know, for I do not know them. They simply appear when necessary, do their work as required, and fade away when finished... None of which has anything to do with 'me'...

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The Truth is silent and has nothing to say on the subject of itself. Anything anyone tells you about it is just an approximation. Including me...

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Self-realization occurs when the perennial question is answered with silence and this silence is accepted as the only answer there is...

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Everything I'm saying to you is meant to fail you into yourself. Once you've tried everything, and seen it all fail, only then will you be ready to surrender into the simplest truth of all - you are already that which you seek...

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What if the only difference between your inner world and your outer world is a faulty perception of 'self' and 'other'?

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Imagine for a moment that your perception of reality is little more than a series of conditioned responses to external stimuli and that 'YOU' do not actually exist as anything more than a voice trying to make sense of it all...

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If you want to be free of your suffering, then pay very close attention to what it has to teach you...

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Freedom isn't about doing what you want, when you want, the way you want. It's about being fully present and at peace within yourself when nothing is going your way...

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The individual sees only himself, in isolation, and compares himself against the rest. The One sees the totality, the indivisible wholeness of being - and is at one with itself in all things...

## Awakening Into Life

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When nothing belongs to you, not even your own self, you are truly free...

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Ego is not 'other than' Self. The distinction is illusory - only relevant to the relative. It is our persistent effort to find ourselves, by distancing ourselves from ourselves, that fuels the fire of separation...

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The ego is an abstraction that creates itself in order to make sense of things... but it has no real substance to it. It is simply a function of being - a movement within conscious - an appearance within awareness... also at one with the stream of Life, from which nothing is separate. For as long as we believe in the notion of a separate ego state, then we must work within that ego structure until we can see beyond it. Once we see beyond it, we realize that it was never real - and we finally understand what this means...

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Do not ask what path to take. Simply walk the one beneath your feet...

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Relax the judgmental, reactive qualities of your mind while letting your heart be open to everything that arises within you, and life itself becomes the most direct means of deep inner transformation...

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It is not your mind that is the problem. It is that you keep staring at it with such intensity that you have blinded yourself to what is beyond it. When the mind is quiet - where did it go? When the mind is noisy - where did it come from? What notices that the mind is 'quiet' or 'noisy'? What notices this noticing? Look closely and you will see for yourself that your mind is not the problem.

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As you learn to relax your mind and let go of your identification with thought, there is a natural process of dropping down, into the heart that begins to unwind itself. When the mind dwells fully in the heart, one comes to rest in the gentle, compassionate embrace of Love's true essence...

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Our deepest fear is not that the saints, sages, and mystics are wrong; it is that they are right. If what we perceive ourselves to be is grounded in ignorance - and turns out to be illusory, insubstantial, and imaginary; what then are we beyond the veil of our perceptions? Only those who have learned to crest the waves of fear and swim beyond them can answer... but the words are useless to those who are not yet ready to drown themselves in the great sea of Truth.

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## About the Author.



Awakening Into Life is a living collection of embodied heart-centered wisdom offered by Bradley Bemis; a deeply conscious Florida-based author, speaker and guide who freely shares his ongoing insights into the nature of Self-realization, non-dual reality, and living an awakened life.

Simple, deep, and direct, his humble offerings are a modernized encapsulation of an ancient truth, presented without the trappings of misguided religious belief systems, culturally-inspired spiritual traditions, or confusing metaphysical theories. It is the truth of our being, stripped down and laid bare for all to see, through direct experiential realization – if they so choose.

Bradley may indeed be a useful resource if you enjoy the work of modern-day spiritual teachers like Eckhart Tolle, Ram Daas, Adyashanti, or Mooji; or past spiritual luminaries like J. Krishnamurti, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramana Maharshi, or Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. His awakened spiritual guidance is in direct alignment with the core foundations of all esoteric mystical transmissions; including Gnosticism (Christianity), Zen and Dzogchen (Buddhism), Advaita Vedanta (Hinduism), Sufism (Islam), Kabbalah (Judaism), Taoism, Sikhism, and several other lesser known ancient wisdom traditions; combined with ongoing research into the modern-day fields of neuroscience, transpersonal and experimental social psychology, linguistic anthropology, and more.

**To learn more about Bradley and his teachings, please visit [awakeningintolife.com](http://awakeningintolife.com).**

Other Free On-line Books Offered by Bradley:

*“Just Be: A Complete Treatise on the Nature of True Spiritual Enlightenment.”*

*“These Five Things: A Roadmap for the Pathless Path of Self-realization.”*