

# Living Realization

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# An Introduction

## **About the Living Realization Sharing**

Present awareness is our real identity. Awareness is prior to any body, story, thought, belief, position, opinion, viewpoint, idea, religion, political affiliation, teaching, national association, emotion, state, sensation, experience and every other appearance or thing. Awareness is not an appearance or a thing. It is the space through which all appearances come and go. The space and what appears within the space are “not two.” That recognition is the Living Realization. The message of Living Realization is a simple message of love, compassion, wisdom, freedom, and peace. Those are words pointing to your true nature beyond the limited “me” you take yourself to be.

We are not individual selves, separate from one another who lack something that we must gain in the future or who must negotiate with other separate people. The false belief in being a separate individual is the basis for personal seeking and suffering and interpersonal, inter-group, inter-religious, political, and international conflict. The recognition of awareness as our real identity reveals all separation to be illusory, not only between people but between all apparent things.

There is no way to know yourself as a separate person or to know that there is something that exists as a separate object except through thinking. Thinking makes it appear that the world is full of separate things and that you are one of those separate things. This central misperception leaves us in a repetitive, self-centered loop of thought. The loop is literally ‘self’-perpetuating. The more we rely on thinking, the more it looks as if there is a separate self. It’s all about “me.”

Thoughts are ideas, abstractions, and symbols. Thoughts can only represent something. They are never the thing which they describe. The thought, “lemon,” is not the thing it represents. We would never try to bite into the thought, “lemon.” Yet we take thoughts of ourselves to be who we are. We are not thoughts. We cannot find ourselves in thoughts. Our real identity is awareness itself. Awareness is that which is aware of all thoughts. This recognition solves the identity crisis fully and finally.

### *The Definition of Living Realization*

**The definition of Living Realization is the recognition of awareness as our real identity and the seeing that everything that appears within awareness has no separate existence from awareness.**

Through the direct recognition of present awareness as our real identity, the seeking, suffering and conflict that arise when we identify with thought can relax. This relaxation and the direct experience of present awareness reveals a natural harmony and equanimity in our lives and in our relationships. A direct, actual, experiential recognition of awareness as our real identity is necessary. Intellectual speculation and belief is not enough. Thinking that we are awareness may be a good start, but it is not enough. No idea, teaching, religion, position, nation, political or religious belief, doctrine, or organization can achieve this level of harmony and equanimity. Thousands of years of human suffering, conflict, and seeking are enough proof of the basic fact that ideas alone cannot heal the suffering, seeking, and conflict. We are not, however, asking you to stop thinking. That would be impossible. The simple invitation here is to recognize present awareness.

There is a human tendency to identify with words, including words pointing to awareness. In Living Realization, we do not encourage techniques designed to permanently stop thinking. Is that even possible? The notion, "I should stop thinking," is just another thought that is all about the "me."

Instead of waging war against thought, we gently invite you to recognize present awareness as your real identity. Awareness is the bare naked awake presence that is looking right now. It is prior to all words, names, bodies, stories, histories, roles, titles, thoughts, emotions, and all other forms that appear within awareness. It is not a thing, not an object we can see. It is presence itself. It is that simple. Anything we think, hear, see, touch, taste, smell, or experience is an appearance of or movement within awareness. Awareness is the unchanging, unmoving space of the present moment. It is inseparable from what you are. It is the only aspect of your existence that has never come and gone. When you were twelve years old, twenty years old, and thirty years old, different thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences moved through this awareness. But this basic, spacious, featureless awareness remained constant and untouched by these movements.

Awareness is what is looking and simply awake right now before the filter of thought divides what is seen into individual parts such as person, time, computer, page, words, Living Realization, world, desk, light, and universe. Actual awareness is the awake space that is looking right now even before thought divides this life into the concepts "awareness" and "appearances." Awareness has no limits or borders. It is like space in that it is undivided, pure, empty, vast. It cannot be grasped through thinking about it. At most, there can be a recognition that the word "space" as it is used here is pointing to what you are in the deepest sense.

Awareness cannot be and is not limited in any way. When we name awareness with such words as "awareness," "being," "no self," "spirit,"

“consciousness,” “Oneness,” “God,” “non-duality,” “the Tao,” “the Divine,” “Brahman,” “Buddha Nature,” or some other word, we do not actually limit or capture awareness in any way. A label is arising. That is all. Labels are merely symbols that point to awareness. All symbols pointing to awareness are appearances or movements within awareness. The label creates the appearance that by naming it we know what awareness is as a thing or that we can own it or have it to the exclusion of others. But actual awareness cannot truly be named, owned, harnessed, embodied, or captured. Names and labels create the appearance that there are separate people who do things with awareness or who can have it to the exclusion of others. It creates the appearance that only certain religions, teachings, teachers, theories, or science understand or own awareness. No one understands or owns awareness because awareness is not an object. It is not a thought. Only thought provides mental understanding. Awareness is the basic space in which all thoughts, names, labels, and the intellect appear and disappear.

Awareness has no boundary or border. No beginning. No end. It is not within the realm of time and spatial measurement. Temporal and spatial measurements are concepts. All concepts appear and disappear within awareness. If you have a sense that awareness has a boundary, that it comes and goes in time, that it is contained in something like a body or mind, or that it has borders, notice that a thought is arising that gives this sense of location, boundary, or border. Thoughts give the sense of orienting something within space and time. Notice that whatever sees this thought is awareness itself. It has no boundary, border, or location.

Awareness is the source of all appearances. It is not any particular appearance (to the exclusion of other appearances) yet no appearance is separate from it. All appearances are equal. You will often hear appearances referred to as “equal” in Living Realization. By equal, we mean that all appearances “do” the same thing. They appear. They hang around for a bit. And then they disappear, leaving only awareness. Awareness is what is left each time an appearance disappears. The first and most critical aspect of Living Realization is to recognize your real identity as the space of awareness that is left when an appearance disappears. That is what the term, “Spiritual awakening” means. It means recognizing that the “spirit” (i.e., awareness) is already here and awake. Most people continue seeking and avoiding spiritual awakening simply by believing that they have to manipulate, change, analyze, or get rid of appearances. This keeps attention only in the appearances, rather than the recognition of your identity as the space in which all appearances come and go.

Let’s talk a little more about the equality of appearances. When we do not move to manipulate, change, analyze, or get rid of them, appearances just naturally come and go in this way. Appearances are also equal in the sense that they are inseparable from and none other

than awareness. Take, for example, a thought. When a thought appears, take a moment to just stop and notice the thought. The boundary line between the thought and the awareness that sees the thought cannot be found. There is no solid line there. This recognition of the indivisibility of awareness and appearances is also critical in Living Realization.

Not only are thoughts inseparable from awareness, but emotions, states, sensations, and experiences are inseparable. These appearances always appear within awareness. If you try to find a boundary line between awareness and any of these appearances that are happening within awareness, you will find no line. In seeing no line between awareness and these appearances, you find that these appearances are not happening to a personal self. They are appearances of awareness. The personal self is a set of thoughts, emotions, and sensations—all of which are appearances only. Awareness is the space in which these appearances arise. Personal identification with appearances naturally fades away in this seeing.

The word “realization” is referring to seeing. It is a present seeing. It is not about a magical or mystical experience. The pointers in Living Realization are always inviting you to notice present awareness. That is all. This is not about a future awakening.

Many insights can appear in this realization. There is a natural tendency to describe the realization. But descriptions of awareness are not awareness itself. It is important to be clear about that at first. It is true that appearances are inseparable from awareness, but if that is taken on as a belief, rather than an actual seeing, we’ve put the cart before the horse. If you see some “thing” move, change, appear and disappear in any way, that is not awareness. That is an appearance of awareness.

Awareness is the awake, timeless space within which appearances come and go. No matter how deeply awareness is recognized, no mental description that arises as a seeming result of this recognition is the unmoving, unchanging awareness itself. Insights are appearances of awareness. They come and go like all thoughts do. They are wonderful. Enjoy them when they come. Repeat them if you like. Share them with friends. However, although descriptions of awareness are indivisible appearances within awareness, these descriptions of awareness come and go. Awareness, as the fundamental, unmoving, unchanging space that cognizes all descriptions, does not come and go.

In recognizing awareness, you come to see that awareness shines radiantly on its own like the bright sun without the need for essentializing the thoughts that come and go within awareness. This allows the mind to relax from its incessant need to analyze, understand, and compare. Each ray of the sun is allowed to be as it is—each path, religion, group, source, view, word, thought, emotion, sensation, state,

and experience is equal within awareness. This is about total rest, wisdom, freedom, compassion, and love.

There is often a persistent belief within us that if we land solidly on one mental conclusion, we have found the truth or have “arrived” at a spiritual awakening. In that case, all that has really happened is more identification with thought. The separate self has simply changed the content of its loop. There is still an emphasis on conceptual views about awareness rather than a direct recognition. Instead of looking to ideas or any other appearance, we invite you to recognize present awareness as your real identity first. All words, spiritual or otherwise, are appearances within or “of” awareness. By clinging to an idea, the idea gives the appearance that there is a self who is the center of knowledge. Belief in this center provides a false sense of certainty and stability. Through maintaining this false center, we tend to marginalize others who do not agree with us and who do not feed our illusions of being the center. There is no center anywhere in the universe, which is to say, there is no separate self. There is only awareness and whatever is appearing within awareness. The appearances are not happening to a person. The “person” is just an appearance within awareness. Appearances are simply happening.

Emphasizing our descriptions of awakening or non-duality rather than recognizing awareness directly tends to solidify the separation, and the sense of being the center that “has it” or “gets it.” This personalizes awareness. Therefore, this is not about “a person living or embodying a realization.” It’s much simpler than that.

There is nothing particularly wrong with any of the words that are used to point to actual awareness except that they sometimes have the effect of appearing to pull attention into identification with thoughts. We begin emphasizing the word “enlightenment” or some other word rather than simply recognizing actual present awareness. This emphasis on words keeps alive the notion that what we are is separate from spirit, God, enlightenment, or whatever other word we are focusing upon. The separation is in the words only. The notion of subject vs. object and the notion that there is a person who must reach some later point of time in which an awakening will happen are all simply ideas appearing within present awareness. In seeing that such separation is merely the product of clinging to concepts, the separation is seen through. The boundary between what we are and what words like “God” and “enlightenment” are pointing to is seen to not exist except as thoughts. In that seeing or “realization,” we have the direct experience of what the words above can only point to. Don’t be fooled by the words “Living Realization.” They are fancy words pointing to the recognition of present awareness as our real identity and the seeing that what appears within awareness is not separate from it. That is all. Although this recognition may sound esoteric or intellectual, it is not. It is as simple as presence itself. It is

simply this moment totally awake to itself through the opening known as “you.”

In Living Realization, we relentlessly yet compassionately point out that these words we use to point to awareness, no matter how clear or unclear they are, are appearing within awareness. They are not actual awareness itself. No matter what is written on this page or on the pages of any spiritual or other writing, awareness is that which sees it. Every spiritual word you have ever heard, read, or spoken is an appearance within awareness. As stated above, even the concept “awareness” is an appearance of the actual awareness that is looking right now. Drop the concept and recognize the pure, actual space that is immediately present and inseparable from what is happening in the present moment. If there is a tendency to try to conceptually or intellectually grasp what is said here, keep it simple and just recognize awareness.

That actual space is awareness. Our most beloved positions, ideas, beliefs, teachings, and opinions about spirituality or anything else are appearances of that spacious awareness. They are not awareness. This may seem like the most difficult thing to see. We want so much to cling to ideas, not realizing that the real freedom is in the direct experience of awareness itself. The simplicity of recognizing awareness is quite beautiful once we start to see that no idea is actually awareness itself.

It is helpful to recognize non-conceptual awareness when you first hear the message here. What does it mean to recognize non-conceptual awareness? It means to drop all labels about yourself, others, the world, and life and simply rest as that non-conceptual sense of presence. In recognizing this non-conceptual awareness, you start to see that there are no separately existing objects “out there.” Objects are concepts. When you recognize non-conceptual awareness, there are no concepts--obviously. Therefore, there is no way to label something as an “object” existing separately “out there,” apart from awareness. Sticking with recognizing non-conceptual awareness is key.

In recognizing this unmoving, unchanging, non-conceptual awareness as what you are, you start to see that all appearances within awareness are not separate from awareness. You see that appearances are “of” awareness. Nothing has a separate existence from anything else. This inseparability or indivisibility, as it is sometimes called in this text, is also critical. Appearances include anything that is temporary, that comes and goes within awareness, including thoughts, emotions, states, experiences, and sensations.

Although appearances are not unmoving, unchanging awareness itself, *they are not separate from awareness*. They are “not two.” Just as reflections in a mirror are not separate in any way from the mirror, appearances within awareness are not separate from awareness itself. Yet appearances are not awareness. Appearances, like reflections, move and change. They come and go. Awareness, like the mirror, is constant,

stable, and unchanging. It is timeless presence itself. Be careful with this metaphor and every metaphor, with the Living Realization text and all texts, and with all pointers generally. Despite the words used in this and every other teaching, no word is actual awareness. Words are appearances “of” it. Without the mirror, the reflections cannot appear. Similarly, without awareness, words cannot appear. Yet no matter what you think about yourself, others, life, the world, spirituality, science, politics, philosophy, or any other subject, that thought is an appearance within awareness. Thoughts do not happen without awareness, yet they are not awareness itself. Thought is like a movie. The world of separate things is really just a play of images that we call thought. And these thoughts have no existence separate from the awareness that sees them. Therefore, awareness and thought are “not two.” Being clear about this goes a long way in the recognition of awareness.

It is important to talk about non-duality in this way so that we don’t get stuck in extreme states of non-conceptualization, stillness, or emptiness. The mind can easily associate non-dual awareness with the absence of things including the absence of sound, emotion, thought, experience, excitement, or enthusiasm. In this detached state, life loses its vibrancy. There you are in some idea of being a witness separate from what is being witnessed. But there is no need to get rid of thought. Only another thought would seek to do that anyway. Awareness has no agenda to be rid of thought. The invitation here is always to recognize awareness as your real identity and see that appearances, including thought, are inseparable from awareness. That ends the idea that we need to achieve or do anything. Living Realization is a present seeing.

To create a split between awareness and its contents, between emptiness and form, is yet another form of separation. It is helpful to see that we are not any appearance, that we are not any thought, emotion, sensation, state, or experience. But this seeing reveals there is no center. It reveals that, in the place where you thought there was a separate self in control of life and living in time as a story, there is only space. And that space is not at all separate from what appears within the space. In this seeing, the entire world is seen to be totally alive. Life is seen to be intimacy itself. Total love recognizing itself in each moment, in each thing, in each thought, in each emotion, in each sensation, in each state, and in each experience. To be mentally identified with the idea you are space or the idea you are emptiness is still just an idea. States of silence and non-conceptualization are still just passing states. All states come and go. To be identified with or to cling to any appearance is to miss the simple and beautiful fact that what you are—absolutely nothing—is appearing as absolutely everything. This is when the most seemingly mundane moment, such as walking to your car on the way to work, feels totally free, as if the universe is recognizing itself for the first time with each step.

In pointing beyond the idea that you are any temporary appearance within awareness, Living Realization does not seek to vilify appearances (i.e., thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, and experiences). We are simply pointing you to the fact that suffering, seeking, and conflict arise when we *identify with* (i.e., focus on, cling to, or emphasize) appearances rather than recognizing awareness as our real identity. In recognizing awareness as our real identity and seeing that appearances come and go within awareness, the tendency to cling to appearances comes to rest. We see that appearances are beautiful reflections of awareness itself. Appearances are like ripples on a pond. There is no way to separate the ripples from the water itself. Although the ripples come and go and each one is different than the others, the ripples are “of water” itself. In the same way, we see that appearances have no separate existence from awareness. In this seeing, we celebrate appearances rather than vilifying them. Life is alive. You are that aliveness.

The remainder of the text of Living Realization only seeks to clarify the basic outline above. The main invitation in Living Realization is this:

*Recognize awareness right now, do not move to manipulate any appearances within awareness, and see that the appearances are not separate from awareness.*

You will see this invitation in many places throughout the text. Stick with this simple but potent pointer.

## About the Organization

Awareness is the great space in which all ideas appear and disappear. Human organizations are essentially ideas. They may have referents that appear “out there” in the world such as buildings, members, doctrines, by-laws, and leaders, but first and foremost organizations are ideas. Even the referents such as “buildings” and “members” are ideas. When you say, “I belong to Organization X,” that is a thought. In seeing that your real identity is awareness itself, the need for finding a sense of self in any organization tends to decrease or disappear. We are often looking for hope, comfort, belonging, love, acceptance, or change of some kind when we join organizations. In recognizing awareness as what we truly are, we see that awareness contains these things we were seeking. We never again have to look outside of ourselves for these things. We see that there are no individual selves, there is only awareness, which is to say, there is only love. Boundaries, divisions, people, religions, political parties, spiritual teachings, organizations, nations, planets, and universes appear as thought appears. Outside of thinking, there is no way to conceive of actual boundary lines. And thought itself is inseparable from awareness. This indivisibility reveals that love is inherent in awareness.

Nonetheless, as appearances of awareness, organizations can be helpful to provide a supportive atmosphere for pointing to and recognizing awareness. In that sense, Living Realization is such an organization. In no longer actually believing that there is a separate “me” that is a member of some other separate thing called an “organization,” then being a member of an organization is no longer about identity, seeking a sense of self, defending the organization, or attacking other organizations or people who are perceived as threats to the message of the organization. It is no longer about separation and conflict. The ego gets taken out of the picture. What is left is a community of people that support each other in the recognition of awareness. It becomes a world-centric organization, devoted to the care and concern of all, not just “those who belong to our group.”

Living Realization is not a philosophy about how the universe works. It is not a cult. It is not an explanation of the way things really are. The way things really are depends on what concepts you buy into. Christians see a particular world. Scientists see a different world. Postmodern thinkers, ecologists, Integralists, nondualists and philosophers see different worlds. There may be some overlap, some agreement about certain concepts. But in Living Realization we do not start with the assumption that thoughts are delivering or mirroring reality. We invite you to question the very thoughts that you believe to be reality. It is questionable as to whether there is one single reality lying around out here waiting for us to discover. Our concepts play a big part in what we call reality. Living Realization, then, is not an

explanation of reality. It is path to complete liberation. In Living Realization, we are not giving you a message you can believe in. We are not giving you the ultimate reality as something that you can express in a neat, conceptual package. We are challenging your already-existing paradigms. This is about looking into those thoughts and beliefs you've been carrying around, the ones that make you believe there are separate objects and people, the ones that make you buy into time, space, and cause and effect, and the ones that make you believe you know what reality is. In Living Realization, this depth of freedom is valued and cherished. It sets us free completely and totally to be in this world in a very open and loving way.

Nothing that is said in the Living Realization text should be taken as absolute truth. Living Realization is a language constructed for the purpose of gaining insight as to why we suffer and seek as humans and finding release from this suffering and seeking. One could just as easily take up the practice or language of another teaching, including one that does not use the word "awareness" as its basic foundation, and find freedom from suffering and seeking. Living Realization is a construction, a way of speaking and investigating your present experience. Its value and benefit are revealed when we treat it as a construction and utilize its language as a tool for investigation. Living Realization does not deal with issues such as whether something is absolutely true, whether things absolutely exist or not, or whether something is real or not real. In Living Realization, we appreciate the vast diversity of views in life including the various religions, philosophies, worldviews, languages, cultures, teachings, political views and other conceptual frameworks. We know that everyone who comes to Living Realization looks from a particular lens e.g., a scientific or rational lens or through the lens of a certain religion, political view, culture, philosophy, worldview or other framework or perspective. We understand that questions and statements regarding issues of truth, reality, and existence are set within these contexts. What is true, real, or existent within one context is not true, real, or existent in another context. For this reason, we discourage questions and answers such as "What is ultimately true?", "What is absolutely real?", and "What ultimately exists?" Instead, we focus on "What is helpful and beneficial?" and "What provides freedom and wisdom and an unconditional sense of love, compassion, and peace?" Words and language are used for a utilitarian purpose in Living Realization. We invite you to accept the language in Living Realization for this purpose rather than for the purpose of deciding ultimate issues of truth, reality, and existence. Once the language of awareness and appearances within awareness is accepted and utilized, the benefits of the language start to become apparent.

These days, words pointing to awareness are clearer than ever. You can search books, stores and the internet and find very clear pointers to present awareness. Yet none of these teachings or teachers owns

awareness. Awareness is that which sees all teachings. Awareness cannot be owned exclusively by any appearance. Can what is looking right now be owned? Awareness is its own light. No appearance within awareness owns awareness. People, teachings, teachers, authorities, and religions are all appearances within awareness. “Living Realization” is merely another idea or set of ideas appearing within awareness. Therefore, there is no ultimate authority, embodied either in human form or in the form of an organization. An appearance can never own awareness to the exclusion of other appearances or be an authority on it. No reflection is the mirror and no reflection represents the mirror exclusively. All reflections are “of” the mirror. All waves are “of” the ocean. All ideas are “of” awareness.

Awareness doesn’t belong to any person, lineage, teacher, teaching, nation, group, culture, organization, or religion. Awareness is our basic identity. As the message regarding awareness has passed down throughout history from one teaching to the next, it remains like sand sliding through fingers. It cannot be held onto in any way. No one owns it. No word captures it. No set of words captures it. In fact, the notion of something “passing down throughout history” is just an idea appearing in it.

Awareness cannot be reduced to an idea because it is not an idea at all. It is not any idea. Be clear about that. It is that which is aware of all ideas and all methods, practices, religions, teachings, organizations, cultures, political beliefs, and every other thing (and it isn’t the idea contained in that last sentence either). Ideas that point to awareness are not separate from awareness.

It is important to speak in this way so you see that “Living Realization” is nothing more than an idea appearing in awareness right now as you read this. In staying “true” to that seeing, Living Realization can never be made into a belief, position, or religion. There is nothing here to defend or protect, to follow, or believe in. Any kind of clinging or identifying or arguing about words in this text or any other teaching or sharing comes from not seeing that ideas are transparent appearances of awareness. Organizations surrounding the message of awareness including “Living Realization” are transparent appearances of awareness. There is great love and clarity in this seeing. We come to realize a capacity to look at all views, through the lens of all frameworks, teachings, cultures, and worldviews. We no longer identify with thought, which allows us to take others’ perspectives. This dissolves boundaries. Far from being a denial of the world of appearances, it becomes a celebration of the radical diversity of views. In recognizing our real identity as awareness, we are free for the first time to look from many different angles and to be compassionate towards others who share different values and belief systems.

It is also impossible to use awareness to make or support relative arguments. Statements such as, “Religion X is the only right religion,”

“child molestation is wrong,” and “America is the best country in the world,” are statements of relative truth. These things—religions, countries, child molesters—exist only in relationship. They exist only in mind. Child molesters only exist because there are others who are not child molesters. America only exists because there are other nations that are not America, such as China. Religion X only exists in relationship to other religions. In Living Realization, we call this the mirror of relationship. Things are actually thoughts. They are not separately existing things at all. Their separateness arises through thought and language. It arises through reliance on mental labeling. Our language is entirely dualistic.

Language only operates through the creation of conceptual boundary lines (e.g., self v. other, right v. wrong, black v. white, America v. China, Religion X v. Religion Y, Living Realization v. other organizations—the list is endless). Relative statements about “the world” continue once there is a recognition of awareness as our true identity. Opinions, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and views are all appearances of awareness. Yet as the boundary lines between “things” are seen to be purely conceptual, great compassion, freedom, love, wisdom, and peace are naturally realized. In the recognition of awareness, we don’t stop making decisions. We don’t stop using the mind. Awareness is not a concept that can be used to defeat other concepts such as Christianity, Buddhism, or some other philosophy, religion, idea, method, or practice. Awareness is not about the destruction of discrimination, concepts, nations, beliefs, religions, philosophies, and worldviews. Awareness is the great space within which all concepts, nations, beliefs, religions, philosophies, and worldviews inseparably appear and disappear. In this seeing, the tendency to identify with appearances relaxes and great wisdom is revealed. This wisdom infuses every decision and every judgment in our lives. We move beyond limiting views that are self-centered and/or group-centered only, into a natural care and concern for all individuals, groups, and worldviews. It’s no longer about “me,” or “our group.” It’s all of us. Everything is an inseparable appearance of awareness. We can argue for thousands of years about which idea, philosophy, conceptual framework, religion, or worldview is better, clearer, or right. But we cannot argue with the simple fact that what is looking at all these ideas is what we really are—awareness.

The boundaries of the Living Realization organization are therefore transparent. Although the Living Realization sharing can be helpful in assisting us to see our real identity as awareness and to see that all appearances are not separate from awareness, Living Realization is merely a set of words. Because no one can own awareness, Living Realization cannot purport to be the final word on awareness. There is nothing to absolutize here. Treating awareness or any words pointing to awareness as some final truth is like holding space in your hands and claiming to exclude other space. It’s impossible! Absolutistic viewpoints

are appearances of awareness. They are not awareness itself. There is no final word on awareness because awareness is not a word. It is the bare naked pure seeing that sees all words and all views, whether those views are personal, religious, fundamentalist, scientific, rational, philosophical, modern, pluralistic, postmodern, or integral.

Awareness is the pure seeing that sees these words right now before you come to agree or disagree with what is said here, before you identify with them or forget them completely. In the direct and immediate discovery of awareness as your real identity, the tendency to identify exclusively with these words or anything about Living Realization or any other view or organization relaxes. A broader view arises from this relaxation, a view that encompasses and includes all views of humanity. This broader view does not find its roots in thought alone. It does not seek to land solidly and finally on one side or the other, on one dualistic viewpoint instead of its opposite. Therefore, it cannot be defended as a “thing” against other “things.” This view is pure naked awareness itself. All thoughts or mental views are seen to be temporary appearances of this broader view of awareness. When there is seen to be no center—including no self or group that can claim exclusive ownership of “knowledge,” “truth,” or “reality”—the universe is seen to be like undivided energy. It is a wide open, stable, unchanging space appearing inseparably as every temporary movement of thought. In that seeing, everything is seen to be perfect as it is. This is an unconditional and limitless love that cannot be contained or owned exclusively by any conceptual view (including any view here). This love sees itself everywhere, in everything and every view. In this seeing, absolutizing and insisting on “being right” gives way to our true nature as love itself, which includes and integrates every expression of itself.

The nothingness of awareness is appearing as the everything-ness of the world of relative appearances. As products of thought and language, appearances exist and have independent meaning only in relationship to each other. To identify with appearances is to buy into the illusion of separation. As soon as we buy into separation as real, we welcome conflict. We welcome the false notion that people, groups, organizations, nations, and religions actually exist apart from awareness and apart from each other and are somehow at odds with each other or need to be reconciled in some way. The universe is never at odds with itself except in the human mind. Love has never been broken. The universe has never actually existed as separate pieces of a puzzle that need to be put together. This recognition resolves the tendency towards separation, seeking, conflict, and war.

The goal of any good teaching regarding awareness is to self-destruct. It is not to gain followers and to become a force that opposes other forces within the universe. Once awareness is directly recognized to be your real identity, you won’t need these pointers or this sharing. In the end, Living Realization has done its job only when it too is seen to be

nothing more than an appearance of awareness. Living Realization, therefore, does not condone teacher-worship of any kind. Please do not look to the teachers in Living Realization as “enlightened beings” or “awakened beings.” All words and ideas, including “enlightenment,” “teacher,” “student,” and “awakened being” exist only in dualistic relationship. Enlightened teachers do not exist without so-called “unenlightened students.” This is the illusion of separation. The most a teacher can do is point you to the fact that his or her identity is the same as yours. Your identity is everyday, ordinary awareness. Stick with this simple yet extraordinary fact. It is the key to freedom. Any notion that a teacher has something that you do not have is merely your personal mental projection.

The most freeing thing is to see that there is no need to rely even on the teaching of awareness itself. The point of all good teachings is to help one realize his or her real identity as awareness. Timeless awareness is the true guru. A good teaching that points to awareness as our real identity will self-destruct. By self-destruct, we simply mean Living Realization is like space itself. Its usefulness as a teaching or set of pointers dies the moment it is seen that it is merely pointing to awareness itself and that “Living Realization” is an appearance of awareness, an appearance which—like all appearances—is empty just as awareness is empty. This may sound strange at first until it is directly recognized. It is then seen that what the word “awareness” is really pointing to empty space seeming to appear as a realm of duality, a realm of ideas, organizations, religions, teachings, nations, people, and things. The realm of duality is like a hologram. The apparent separation is not denied, but the boundaries of the hologram are seen to be unreal. The “things” that appear in space are inseparable from the space. They are none other than space itself.

We talk about the self-destructive aspect of Living Realization because humans have a tendency to want to find and believe in grand narratives about future utopia or organizations that will fulfill some future promise. This tends to keep people hooked into the idea that the future holds salvation or freedom. Living Realization makes no such promise. Its sole aim is to reveal that *present* awareness is our real identity and that all ideas, including grand narratives are appearances of awareness.

Any apparent evolution, change, or transformation of the world occurs only as a natural unfolding within and as timeless awareness itself. Grand narratives including narratives surrounding enlightenment, God, science, religion, culture, and so forth are ideas. We can enjoy ideas. We can use them as maps, injunctions, pointers and tools of communication. We can play with them. We can express them freely and use them to communicate and create in the world of appearances. But to buy into the idea that ideas are anything more than appearances of awareness is to buy into the illusion of separation and to miss the

obvious basic fact that awareness is the unmoving, unchanging, unevolving fundamental emptiness within which all movement, change, and evolution inseparably appear and disappear.

We invite you not to buy into anything that has been said here. Instead, we invite you to simply look with us and see for yourself that your real identity is the actual present awareness to which the words can merely point. That seeing provides the freedom, love, compassion, peace, and wisdom you have been seeking. This is why there are no promises in Living Realization regarding future attainment of special states, enlightenment, bliss, or anything else. What we have been seeking is already here. It is what is looking presently. All we have to do is be open to its recognition. If you feel so moved, please join us in this endeavor to speak openly, freely, and directly about our real identity as that which cannot be contained. To join the Living Realization mailing list or to participate in online meetings, contact us at [Livingrealization@hotmail.com](mailto:Livingrealization@hotmail.com).

# Basic Points

**These are the basic points of Living Realization. The chapters following these basic points discuss each point in more detail.**

- ▶ The central invitation in Living Realization is to recognize present awareness and, without moving to manipulate any appearance, see that the appearance is not separate from awareness.
- ▶ Awareness is our real identity. Awareness is not an appearance. It is the unmoving, unchanging cognizing space through which all appearances come and go. Recognizing present awareness means to recognize this unmoving, unchanging aspect of the present moment.
- ▶ An appearance is *anything* that moves or changes or comes and goes within awareness. All appearances are temporary. Appearances include thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences.
- ▶ To “not move to manipulate an appearance” means to not make effort to analyze, neutralize, overcome, figure out, get rid of, understand, or do anything with anything that appears within awareness. Stated another way, it means to notice that awareness naturally allows each appearance to be exactly as it is. It is only the personal will that moves to manipulate appearances. In Living Realization, we call the personal will the “simulated self.”
- ▶ To say that appearances are not separate from awareness or are inseparable from awareness is to say that they never appear outside awareness. Thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experience are movements of awareness, not things that exist independently of awareness.
- ▶ The “simulated self” is the dream-like separate self sense. Because it is not your real identity, we call it a simulation. This simulated self appears within what you really are—present awareness. The simulated self is more than just the “I” thought alone. It is more than just thought and emotion. It is an entire physical and emotional contraction supporting a time-bound, thought-based story.
- ▶ Living Realization uses the term, “the triangle of the simulated self,” to describe the three bundles of thought: past, present, and future. These three bundles of thought exist along a continuum of time and create the false sense that you are a thought-based, time-bound story, rather than the awareness that sees that story.

- ▶ A “core story” is the central content of your story. It is highly personalized. Each person has a different core story. E.g., “victim,” “seeker,” “know-it-all.”
  
- ▶ The mirror of relationship is a term explaining that no thing exists in and of itself. Things exist only in relation to other things. They exist in relationship. E.g., there is only a self if there is an other; there is only right if there is wrong. This is important because it reveals that our personal identities are dualistic stories that only have meaning in relation to other stories. Our real identity is the awareness that sees all these dualistic stories.
  
- ▶ A shadow is a dualistic aspect of the separate self story that gets repressed and then projected outward as an “other.” The repression and projection happens because the particular aspect is either too ugly or too beautiful. By boxing and hugging shadows, we stay locked in the separate self sense and conflict with others.

# CHAPTER ONE:

## Recognizing present awareness

**Right now, recognize present awareness. Don't move to manipulate any appearance within awareness. See that the appearance is not separate from awareness.**

This is the main pointer in Living Realization. It sums up the whole text. There are many other pointers to come, but if you can stick with the simple pointer above, that is all that is needed.

### A. A Few Points About Pointers

The words we use to speak about present awareness are only pointers. There is a tendency to “hook into” the concepts, comparing them to other concepts you have heard, deciding which concepts sound the best, and then mistaking the concepts for that to which they are pointing. This is a huge trap. Therefore, before we begin pointing, let's discuss a few points about pointers so that you don't fall into the trap of believing that when we use the word “awareness” we are talking about a concept.

To speak of present awareness as if it is something totally separate from that which appears within awareness is delusion. It comes straight from our language only. To speak within the confines of dualistic language about non-duality is to divide life into ideas that get their meaning only in relation to other ideas. See the challenge in the use of concepts? *Actual* awareness itself is not a concept. The word “awareness” is a concept. Concepts come from our dualistic language. The moment we identify “awareness” conceptually, we define it in relation to some other concept—“appearances.”

One could say, “It's all awareness,” or “all there is, is Oneness.” One could also say that there is no way to rest as or recognize awareness because that implies a person who is separate from awareness and who must do something to realize awareness. That implies duality! Fair enough. For some, those pointers may be all that is needed. Perhaps just hearing those very clear pointers is enough to see through the illusion of separation, to see that present awareness is already what you are and there is no way to reach what already is. How can you reach what is simply awake and present right now? It's impossible.

There are many clear pointers to this seeing in various teachings and traditions. Perhaps there is some intellectual understanding of the pointers. Yet, if you are reading this now, it is safe to assume that the direct, experiential knowing of that to which the words are pointing

remains less than fully recognized. That's ok. Don't make your "non-recognition" into a problem. Be gentle with yourself. Read on.

It would be great if we could just throw around a few words or metaphors that would instantly reveal the direct experience of that to which the words are pointing. In some cases, one clear pointer is all that is needed.

In most cases, however, a few words won't do. It's not that the words are wrong, incorrect, or unclear. It's that they are words. Concepts. Ideas. Thoughts. Again, thought operates only within our dualistic language. It creates the appearance of separation between apparent objects where there is no real separation. It creates a world of conceptual opposites in which one thing exists only in relation to its opposite. To thought, the concept of "nothing" exists only in relation to another concept called "something" or "everything." Similarly, to thought there is no subject without object, no black without white, no wrong without right, no clear without unclear, no me without you, no us without them, no non-duality without duality, no awareness without appearances, no Christian without Muslim, no life without death—the list goes on. Each of those words gets its identity at least in part from what it is not. To the thinking mind, "black" is black partly because of what it is not—"white." "Nothing" only has meaning within our language because of its relationship to "thing." The sense that words are pointing to clearly distinct, separate objects is a product of thought. Thought is a wonderful tool. It is not to be denied or suppressed in any way. But Living Realization is pointing to seeing that thought is creating the appearance of a separation that is not ultimately real. The most direct way to see that is to simply recognize present awareness as your real identity and notice that all appearances are inseparable from awareness. Thinking about awareness and thinking about thinking won't help much.

A good indication that present awareness has not been recognized as your real identity is the degree to which you believe that some dualistic idea is awareness. Remember, awareness is not any idea. Ideas are appearances of awareness. Confused? Then simply look back at the entire page you just read. None of the ideas presented here are awareness. Each one of these words—and every other word you can think of—comes from within a finite set of symbols that we call language. Every symbol gets its meaning from its relationship to other symbols. Therefore, no symbol here or anywhere else ever expresses non-dual awareness or non-separation.

## **B. Recognizing Present Awareness**

Don't make the mistake of trying to use the intellect to recognize present awareness. Your greatest ideas and descriptions of awareness are merely movements within awareness. Keep it simple and let all the

ideas above drop away for one moment. Let all the ideas you have ever learned about awareness come to rest right now, including the ideas “God,” “spirit,” “the divine,” “the Tao,” “consciousness,” “oneness,” “non-duality,” and all other words.

Just recognize what is timelessly awake and looking. Forget everything that has been said in this text thus far. Just drop it all and look into the present fact of your own being. What is looking is what you are. That IS awareness! Awareness is more akin to the white page on which this text appears than any pointer that appears on it. Now drop that pointer too!

Awareness is so immediately here and present in all situations that it repeatedly gets overlooked as we focus on ideas appearing within it and trying to describe it or the emotions, sensations, states and experiences that come and go within it. For one moment, forget about all ideas, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences. What is here, as your very nature, that has been here all your life? What is here that never moves or changes, that never comes and goes? So many people overlook this basic fact and, instead, go looking into the various things that move through awareness such as thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences. Don't make that mistake. Stop right now and notice the basic, actual space of your existence. This is the actual space of the present moment. It is the fundamental space of all existence. Be only interested in this space. Let all thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences come and go within the space. Notice that this space is that which does not come and go. This space is actual awareness. Actual awareness is the space within which even these pointers on this page appear and disappear.

It is so important to start with the simple fact of being rather than trying to grasp actual awareness with the intellect. No concept is awareness itself. So no matter how profound or ridiculous your concepts are about awareness, they are not the actual awareness through which the concepts come and go. See what it is about yourself that has never moved, changed, grown, or come and gone. Stay with this fact alone.

In Living Realization, we define “appearances” as anything that moves or changes, has a beginning and end, or that comes and goes within awareness. This includes thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, objects, and experiences. They come and go. In Living Realization, we invite you to discover what never changes or moves and is simply awake right now to what is changing and moving. That is being. That IS actual awareness. These words are moving and changing. They are coming and going, constantly being replaced by other words in this text. None of these words are awareness. Awareness is the space that allows each one of these words to appear and disappear effortlessly. Now maybe you can relax and let every word that appears in the remainder of this text to float on by. There is nothing to remember, nothing to hold onto, and nothing to grasp intellectually.

Still confused? Confusion comes from believing that there is some idea you have to grasp before recognizing awareness. But awareness is simply awake. That is all! It is the alert presence that is looking right now. Don't refer back to the last sentence or paragraph or to some other page in this text. Awareness is just space. No word has ever grasped space or will ever grasp space. No word will truly clarify that which is looking at all words. Simply feel into or fall back into the space that is simply awake in the here and now, the space that is inseparable from this moment. There is a vast awake space within which this moment appears. That IS awareness.

Now drop even the words "awareness" and "being" and any other pointer you have read in another teaching. Simply rest here. Just be. Take a moment for that. This natural rest is what you are.

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What you are in the most basic sense is the simple sense of present awareness before you look to any labels appearing within awareness. Awareness is the actual, vast, basic, no-boundary, non-conceptual space from, in, and through which all appearances (including all labels) seamlessly come and go.

Awareness is timeless, spacious, empty, formless, and open. It knows no boundaries. It knows no divisions. Only concepts create boundaries and divisions.

Awareness is impersonal. It is not "your" awareness. The concept of ownership arises only through thinking. The "I" thought itself is an appearance of awareness. Any sensation(s) in the body that give the sense that awareness is located in your body (either in your head, or chest, or some other part) is happening in awareness. It is not awareness itself. It is not what sees the sensation. Actual awareness—that which is aware of the sensation—has no boundary and cannot be proven to be limited to an individual body.

If a thought arises as you are recognizing present awareness as the simple awake space that is present, instead of answering the thought or adding more thoughts to it, simply allow that thought to be exactly as it is. Don't manipulate it in any way. Let it come to rest in awareness. Thought is temporary. Its very nature is to come and go very quickly. As soon as a thought disappears, there is awareness. If we don't move to stop thought, analyze it, understand it, add to it, or do anything with it, then thought naturally resolves itself back into the space of present awareness from which it came. Simply notice the space that is left as a thought comes to rest. Yet if another thought appears after the previous thought, let that thought be as it is. In letting thought be just as it is,

and not adding energy to it by analyzing or doing anything to it, it starts to lose its energy. To just “be” or recognize awareness does not mean to permanently end thinking. Dropping thought may be helpful in the beginning to recognize present awareness. But as we rest, we see that thought has its own energy and that, if we do not move to do anything with it, it comes to rest naturally in awareness. It is only when we move to manipulate thought, believing that we have some control over it, that it continues to have power over us. All thought arises from awareness and falls back into it. In recognizing awareness as our real identity, we see that awareness has no agenda to do anything with thought, including drop it. The most we can do is simply notice the naturally-occurring appearance and disappearance of thought. As we see that there is no longer a need to manipulate thought in any way, it is no longer seen as a problem. It arises and falls gently, harmlessly, spontaneously, and involuntarily from awareness and naturally returns back to awareness. Remember, the point is not to stop thinking but rather to recognize present awareness, which is the space within which all thoughts appear and disappear.

Whenever anything appears (a thought, emotion, sensation, state, or experience), we simply notice that it is an appearance of awareness. It is not awareness itself. We then get a felt sense of the pure seeing of the appearance. This is not about focusing intensely on the appearance. It is more like letting the appearance remain unmolested, letting it arise and fall on its own, and noticing that what we are, in the truest sense, is that which is doing the noticing. Recognizing awareness just means allowing the pure seeing to recognize itself.

The pure seeing is not an appearance. We will not find seeing anywhere as a “thing.” Present awareness is the act of seeing itself. Think of “pure seeing” as a verb, rather than a noun or object. This is not about recognizing yourself as a person who is aware of the thing that is arising. See that even the thought “I” is an appearance within awareness. This is not about looking only from the eyes. The entire space within and without the body and mind is undivided awareness. This is an invitation to allow that awareness to recognize itself. “Within” and “without” are both ideas that appear and disappear. Ultimately, we cannot even rely on those points of view as “truth.” They are just pointers.

Pure seeing is the present, clear, empty, quiet, peaceful, awake space from which every appearance appears and into which it disappears. Seeing is always happening whether there are appearances being seen or not. Awareness is there during the day and even at night in formless sleep. It doesn’t come and go. Only appearances within awareness come and go. Awareness is that which sees every appearance that is seen but the seeing itself is not an appearance.

Recognizing awareness means allowing awareness to recognize itself rather than be focused on thoughts or other appearances

happening in awareness. Yet if thoughts arise, those are simply allowed to fall back into the space of awareness very gently on their own. We don't move to understand the thoughts that arise or add intellectual analysis to them. They are simply allowed to be in the space just as they are.

Recognizing awareness is more like the present recognition of being, rather than a doing. We are not recognizing awareness as a "doing" to reach a later point of awakening or enlightenment. We are recognizing awareness right here, right now. Recognizing awareness is an end in and of itself! We are recognizing that the pure, timeless seeing is what we are in the most basic sense, before any thought appears including thoughts about practicing presence or resting as awareness throughout the day.

In Living Realization, we prefer the phrase "recognizing present awareness" over other phrases such as "resting as awareness," "being present," "watching," or "witnessing." We are not engaging in a practice in time to reach a later point in which you recognize awareness. "Later" and "future" are ideas arising in present awareness. Whenever the thought arises, "I must practice presence," "I must rest as awareness throughout the day," or "I must be present more this week," see those as ideas arising in present awareness itself. We are not inviting you to do something throughout the day or in the coming months. We can only relentlessly and compassionately point you to the fact that present awareness is presently what you are. This moment is the only portal to that seeing. If you want to interpret that as something to do in the coming months, in some attempt to reach a later point, that is your right. But be clear that the notion of time is a presently arising idea only. Therefore, the self that would make presence into a story of time is just a presently arising idea.

In recognizing awareness, we are not inviting you to identify as a separate witness to what is appearing. You are not a separate watcher or witness. The sense that there is a separate entity watching or witnessing is, itself, an idea or sense that appears within awareness. This entity may be experienced as a bodily sensation or a tension behind the eyes or in the head. Whatever it is, if it is a 'thing,' it is not awareness itself. Awareness is not any thing. It is the seeing itself. An appearance of awareness can never appear without awareness itself. Without awareness, the thought, "I'm the witness," cannot and does not appear. Awareness is the screen on which all appearances appear and disappear. The awareness and the appearances of awareness are 'not two.' There is no actual boundary between the two, only a conceptual one.

But this is not about seeing or catching everything that arises and falls. Sometimes awareness sees thoughts, emotions, and other things that arise. Sometimes it doesn't. We are inviting you to simply be and to notice that awareness naturally allows everything—every thought, emotion, state, and experience—to be just as it is. When something

happens and it is not noticed, that ‘not-noticing’ is perfectly allowed. This is about relinquishing the desire to do or achieve something and to understand or analyze what is happening.

Recognizing awareness includes recognizing inner body awareness. We allow awareness to naturally recognize itself in the inner body. This is not an invitation to think of a body part as a separate thing but rather to feel into the awake, alive space within each body part. Each part of the body—from toe to head—is awareness. This is awareness being aware of itself.

In the sense of being a separate self, it does not feel as though the inner body is clear, empty, awake awareness. It feels more like a physical contraction supporting a time-bound, thought based story of “me.” By recognizing inner body awareness, there is a recognition that the inner body is like a bubble. There is clear, empty space within the body, even though the body appears to have a boundary around it. The space “inside” the body resonates at the same frequency as the space “outside” the body. The bubble analogy is good for getting a conceptual picture of what is being pointed to. But once we have the picture, we drop the pointer and feel into the direct experience of it.

If visual stimulation seems to get in the way, we can close our eyes. But the recognition of awareness is available with eyes closed or open. Awareness is not limited to the body. The invitation to recognize awareness is not an invitation to look only within the body. Notice that, in closing our eyes, the boundary between the body and what is “outside” the body is not as strong. With eyes closed, we can no longer see the boundary of skin that appears to separate the body from the rest of life. We may still feel sensations that give the sense that there is a body there. But notice that they are sensations appearing in awareness. Awareness is looking at the sensations. Therefore, the body is not what we are in the ultimate sense. It is appearing in what we are. And the appearance is not separate from awareness itself. In other words, only ideas create the appearance that there is a separation between something called “awareness” and something else called a “body.”

Just as there appear to be things “outside” the body/mind such as trees that are objects in awareness, there are also objects “inside” the body/mind such as thoughts, emotions, and sensations. All of these are objects appearing in the pure seeing itself. This allows us to see that the boundary between the body and its surroundings is essentially just conceptual. The conceptual labels “inside” and “outside” are appearances of awareness.

With eyes either open or closed, we sense that the space “inside” the body is the same space as the space “outside” the body. This is a doorway into seeing that awareness has no boundary. It is not personal to the body. There is only undivided space with no beginning and no end. When there is identification with thoughts, emotions, the body, and other appearances, the illusion of separation arises.

The invitation here is recognize awareness right now, not throughout the day or for the next few weeks. There is only ever right now. Days, weeks, months, and years are only ideas appearing within present awareness. Awareness is timeless. It is only available now.

If you find the mind arguing with the pointer “recognize awareness,” then drop that pointer and use “rest as awareness” or “be present.” If you believe a pointer is needed, find one that shows you that all pointers are just ideas appearing and disappearing in present awareness. Find one that takes you straight to the recognition of present awareness as your real identity in the here and now. Notice that the tendency to argue with concepts comes from the belief that awareness is a concept that has to be defined or defended. Although the word “awareness” is a concept, actual awareness is not. Recognizing actual awareness through direct experience goes a long way in no longer fighting with yourself or others over conceptual pointers and teachings and over notions of who is or who is not present, enlightened, or awakened, and what is true and not true, clear and not clear.

## **C. Tools For Recognizing Awareness**

### **Center of the Room**

Sit in the middle of a room in a chair that can rotate around in a circle. Start by looking at only one wall. Notice all the internal and external objects that appear as you look at that wall. There may be the appearance of external objects (colors, textures, lines, lamps, doors, pictures, etc). But notice that there really are no external objects until thought arises. Notice that thought is a so-called “internal object.” Without thoughts appearing internally, there are no independent objects appearing out there. Thought creates the notion that there are things existing independently out there. See that all appearances, whether internal or external, are appearing within a space. Notice that the space is what you are. This space (also called “awareness”) is the only thing that never moves or changes.

Test this out by rotating your chair to the next wall, then to the next wall, and then the next. As you face each wall, completely new appearances happen. New thoughts, which name new “objects” out there, such as “chair,” “picture,” and “door.” The only thing that remains unchanged is the space within which all of these appearances are viewed. That space is awareness. It is the only constant. All appearances come and go inseparably within that space.

### **2 Points**

For this exercise, we locate two objects (points) at least three feet apart in the room in which we are now sitting. These objects can be anything—a lamp, desk, plant, or light. Let’s call them object A and object B. Notice that the eyes can only focus on one object at a time. We go back and forth between A and B. We notice that we cannot see both objects at once with directed attention. We can only oscillate back and forth between the two objects. First A, then B, then back to A, then back to B.

We then stop focusing on one object at a time. Instead, we “pull back” and notice the awareness within the body and mind that knows the present moment directly. This space resonates at the same frequency as the actual space in the room. We notice that this present awareness is not focused on any particular object. It is simply aware of space itself. It is the space that holds the objects and allows them to simply be. This space is not focused on either object. It is not trying to name them or compare them. It is simply and gently awake to the objects.

This space that allows and holds both objects is pure, transparent seeing that is naturally empty, awake, and formless. It is not focused at all on any one thing in the room. It is the space in which all objects appear including the two objects A and B. If a thought arises that says, “I don’t get it” or “I don’t see it,” we just notice the thought and return to the simple spacious present awareness. Thought will never see what is being pointed to here. Thought can only think about or look at one object at a time.

### **Looking from the space**

For this exercise, we first look in the mirror. We notice that there is a form staring back. In the reflection, we clearly see a physical form with eyes, a nose, a mouth, ears, and hair. In walking away from the mirror, however, we notice that only space is looking outward at the world. In that area where the reflection showed a physical form there is now only space looking outward. From the view looking outward behind the face, there is no form. There is no face. There are no eyes, nose, mouth, ears, or hair. There is only spacious awareness looking at the world.

What we took to be a solid separate form when looking in the mirror is really spacious awareness when looking at the world from the area behind the face. We notice that the entire world appears in that spacious awareness from which we are looking. We see that there is no division between that space and the world that is appearing in it. How can there be a boundary? Space is not a thing. Only things have boundaries.

### **Awareness “around” emotions**

As emotions arise, no matter whether they are positive or negative, we notice the space around the emotion. We forget the mental labels we use to talk and think about emotions such as anger, sadness, grief, pain, loneliness, fear, anxiety, happiness, or any other label. When an emotion arises, we simply see that it is a raw energy form in the body. It has a beginning and an end. It has a shape.

We notice the mind's tendency to label the raw energy or strategize or analyze it away. In noticing the thought that labels the energy or wants to strategize or analyze it, the thought is allowed to naturally die and awareness can return to noticing the raw energy form in the body.

When we say "notice" the emotion, we are saying allow awareness to become aware of itself around the emotion. Notice the actual space that holds the emotion. Notice that, although the mind may have an agenda to be rid of or strengthen the emotion, the actual space has no such agenda. It simply allows the emotion to be exactly as it is.

### **Recognizing silence**

No matter where we go, what we do, or what sounds are arising, silence is permeating the universe. There is a quietness here that is overlooked in each moment as the mind searches for the next thought, the next state, or the next experience. This silence cannot be known by thinking about it. It can only be known through present awareness. Present awareness resonates at the same frequency as this permeating silence. There is silence "inside" the body and "outside" the body. It is one silence. That silence is a doorway to present awareness. It is revealing our true nature. We simply notice silence. We don't notice silence throughout the day as a practice. We notice that silence is only here now. There is only present awareness. We notice that every sound arises out of the silence and falls back into it. We notice that there is no "we" separate from that silence. Even the sounds "I" and "we" arise from and fall back into that present silence.

### **Locating Awareness**

In each of the experiments above, it may have looked like we were pointing to an awareness that is located in the body or in the mind, as if it is emanating out of your eyes. There is a tendency when reading non-dual pointers to believe that awareness has a location. This belief accompanies the belief that awareness is my awareness and that other people have their own "awarenesses." Let's look at this more closely.

Awareness is not a thing. It is not an object. Only objects appear to have location. Awareness is more like pure space. There is nowhere to locate space as being in one place but not another. The word "space" here is just a pointer. Let it point you to the realization that the fundamental essence of life is one undivided, purely empty, boundary-

less space. There is no place where there is not space. Even where you see a form, as in a cup, the cup is none other than space. There is no way to pull the space within the cup out of the cup. There is no way to pull the cup out of the space in which it appears. The cup and the space are inseparable. So space is everywhere. And that isn't really accurate. To say it is anywhere, nowhere, or everywhere is to give it a location.

This one undivided space has no location. Location appears when thought appears. In order to even contemplate the notion that awareness resides within the body and mind, there must be a subtle mental image or outline of a body and mind that appears as a concept. It's often very subtle, more like an assumption, but it's there. Just notice it when it appears. Notice that whatever sees that thought is actual, pure, spacious, non-locatable awareness. In noticing that thought, or any other thought that attempts to locate space as being only inside or outside something, it is realized that what is noticing is not a concept. That which is noticing is actual space. In simply resting there for one moment, completely free of thought, it is seen that space cannot be located and is not located anywhere exclusively. It is the basic space permeating everything. This should clear up the notion that awareness is located only in the body and mind. The concept of a body and mind appears within actual awareness. And the concept itself is empty and transparent. Look at it. It is as empty as air. It is as empty as the space in which it appears. This reveals that the thought that appears to locate awareness somewhere and the space in which it appears are inseparable. They are "not two."

## **Questions and Answers**

*You seem to be pointing to Awareness as the non-conceptual space where one abides. Is this correct?*

Ultimately, no person abides there. Awareness is what we are. It is prior to the thought, "I'm Scott." The pointer "recognize awareness" is directed at that seeing. For those who have not had a direct, experiential introduction to what they are—awareness—it can be helpful, in the beginning, to allow all descriptions and labels about yourself, others, life, reality, and spirituality to come to rest completely. This reveals a non-conceptual space prior to all appearances (i.e., all thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences).

For some, one look from and as this non-conceptual space is enough. In recognizing this non-conceptual awareness prior to thought, the entire "world of separate things" is seen to be nothing more than a conceptual overlay. In non-conceptual awareness, that overlay is absent. There is only pure awareness. For others, one moment of looking from

and as awareness is not enough. Instead, it may be more helpful to allow all concepts to come to rest on a repeated basis, whenever it is convenient (i.e., throughout the day). As this happens, there becomes a natural return to this non-conceptual space. The moments of being able to rest as non-conceptual space become longer. Eventually, it is realized that this non-conceptual space is not an event in time to which you, as a separate person, are returning. It is realized that this space is what you are. “Leaving” and “returning” to awareness are seen to be appearances or experiences coming and going inseparably within the space. The space is ever present, whether it is recognized or not.

*So that’s it? If I get rid of thought, I’ve recognized awareness?*

It’s all awareness. Awareness includes not only this non-conceptual space but also the concepts appearing and disappearing within and as the space. To believe otherwise is to split the universe in two, between something called non-conceptual awareness and concepts. Only thought would do that.

Awareness includes all appearances (i.e., all thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, and experiences). Appearances cannot be found to have a separate existence. Nothing can stand outside awareness because there are no separate things. Things are not separately-existing “things” at all. They are thoughts. Try to conceive of a cup of coffee without the thought or mental image “cup of coffee” appearing. It is impossible. Living Realization is not about getting rid of anything. It is about seeing that there is no “thing” to get rid of. Again, it’s all awareness. This is why the basic invitation is repeated many times throughout the text. It is worth repeating here:

***Recognize present awareness and, without manipulating appearances, see that appearances are inseparable from awareness.***

No thought has ever been or will ever be experienced outside awareness. Thought is none other than awareness. It is inseparable from it. The invitation to recognize non-conceptual awareness is only an initial investigation or method. The other aspect of the invitation is to see that appearances are inseparable from awareness. In the moment of seeing a thought appear, notice that it is transparent just as non-conceptual awareness is transparent. Notice that this thought only happens because there is awareness here. This is another way of saying that thought is inseparable from awareness. Thoughts are temporary, empty images appearing inseparably within empty awareness.

Inseparability refers to the fact that you cannot pull a thought apart from the awareness in which it appears any more than you can pull a cloud apart from the space of the sky in which it appears. It’s all

sky. It's all awareness. The appearance of a cloud does not obscure the sky. The sky remains. It is just space itself. There is no object "sky." That is just a concept. Similarly, awareness is not an object that we notice or return to. The word "awareness" is just a concept. That concept and all concepts come and go within actual, experiential space. You are that empty space.

The appearance of a thought cannot obscure the space in which the thought appears. Space has never been and can never be obscured by something appearing within and as the space. Once we know, unshakably, that our real identity is pure spacious awareness, we see that appearances are inseparable from it. At that point, there is no need to even allow thought to come to rest. Thought is seen to be the movement of awareness itself. In this seeing, thought naturally loses its emotional and psychological charge. There is naturally less or no identification with it. When identification with thought is absent, thought no longer causes suffering. It no longer seems as though thought is pointing to a reality "out there," objectively separate from what you are.

*What can I do to recognize awareness?*

In Living Realization, we are pointing to what you are (i.e., what is presently here) not what you can do now to achieve a goal later. The idea of doing something now to achieve a recognition later comes from within the time-bound story of self, which we will talk more about in later chapters. If some method or practice (like resting repeatedly throughout the day as non-conceptual awareness) works to reveal present awareness as a vast, unmoving, unchanging, cognizing space prior to (and permeating) all appearances, then use the method or practice. But be clear that what is being revealed is a timeless essence. Awareness is simply what is awake right now. It is the space within which even all practices and methods appear and disappear.

The word "being" can be helpful here. Although some teachings make a distinction between "awareness" and "being," Living Realization uses these words interchangeably. What do you have to do in order to be? Nothing. All that can happen is a recognition that being already is. That's what you are. Being. You are not the concept "being" nor any other concept including a "person who is recognizing being." Simply drop all concepts right now (including the concepts "being" and "awareness") and *notice an actual, non-conceptual sense of being that is already here*. That is your real identity. Any idea that you have to do something to get to what is already here appears and disappears within actual being (i.e., within actual awareness). You are not anything that temporarily appears and disappears. The "I" thought and the notion, "I need to do something," are both appearances that come and go in what is presently aware.

*Shouldn't I stop for moments throughout the day to "be present" or "rest as awareness?"*

If this helps, use it. But be clear that the notion that there is one "moment" different from another "moment" is an aspect of the realm of appearances. It is time. Time does not exist "out there" as a separate, objective reality. Time arises only when thought arises. For example, how do you know it is Wednesday? You know it only when that thought is appearing. When that thought is not appearing, there is no Wednesday. Similarly, there are only "separate moments" when you have the thought, "There are separate moments" or "This is a separate moment."

The belief in separate moments in time comes from emphasizing thought, experience, and other temporary appearances rather than recognizing the unmoving, unchanging awareness within which those appearances come and go. This is why moments feel temporary. Time is thought. The notion of different moments comes from thought. When we entertain the notion of having to rest repeatedly in the future, we go chasing after a future carrot called "enlightenment" or "awakening" or some other mental label, which then always feels out of reach. It is fine to do this practice, but it is important to understand, at least conceptually at first, that there is only timeless awareness and that the notion of separate occurrences in time is thought only.

Awareness is ever-present, timeless actually. It is here always. It is not something we move in and out of through time. The sense of "leaving awareness" is really just the appearance of thought. Perhaps you find yourself thinking about what happened yesterday, and it feels like you have "left awareness." You may think you then have to "return to awareness." There is no such thing as leaving awareness. There is no such thing as returning to it. These are both viewpoints of awareness. There is no little entity within you who can control appearances or viewpoints. There is no separate self. There is only thought appearing and disappearing inseparably within awareness, giving the impression of leaving and returning to awareness. When thought appears, it may, for a while, feel like you left awareness. But thought is an inseparable appearance of awareness. The appearance of thought actually proves that awareness is here. Without awareness, there can be no thought because the two are inseparable. As thought appears, see that it is an appearance within awareness, inseparable from it. If you do not move to manipulate or analyze the thought, or add other thoughts to it, the thought naturally comes to rest within awareness.

The thought about yesterday is a thought appearing within present awareness right now. You don't have to forcefully return to awareness. You already are awareness. Just notice that, when no energy or analysis is forced upon the thought about yesterday, it naturally comes back to

rest in awareness, which is what you already are, what you have always been, and what you will always be. Awareness is the unchanging and unchanging space in which thought involuntarily appears and disappears. Awareness never goes anywhere. It does not leave and return. Thought and other appearances merely appear and disappear within it, giving the sense that you have left and that you must return.

The notion of taking moments to rest as awareness might be helpful in a practical sense. Use that method, if it works, but be careful. Every method has a shelf life. Believing that you need to continue resting as awareness in the future tends to solidify the belief in the time-bound story of a “me.” This confuses present awareness with what is appearing inseparably within awareness. If this moment appears peaceful as you rest as awareness, thought likes to take a snapshot of it and confuse what is appearing within awareness (i.e., a state of peacefulness) with awareness itself. It then tries to maintain that state, which means it is trying to carry it over to the next moment. This is what creates the sense of a person living in time and controlling appearances. It tends to solidify seeking.

The same is true for a moment in which frustration or non-peacefulness are appearing. As frustration appears, there is a tendency to look for some future moment when frustration is gone. This tends to solidify the idea that you haven’t “rested as awareness enough yet” or that you “aren’t enlightened yet.” And so the mind gets really busy back in the time-bound story of “me.” It rejects the present experience of frustration and goes looking for its future peaceful state. But both “peaceful” and “frustrating” are temporary appearances within present awareness. There is nowhere to go. There is nothing to escape from or find in the future. There is only ever present awareness and whatever is appearing inseparably within it.

Awareness is the unchanging *present* space within which all appearances come and go. Don’t confuse appearances that come and go with awareness itself, which does not come and go. The recognition of awareness, right now, is an end in and of itself. It ends the notion that there is some appearance within awareness (i.e., some thought, emotion, state, sensation, or experience) that you have to maintain, get back to, find, seek, or let go of. This recognition shines the light on the mistaken notion that there really are separate moments and that you have to continue “being present” or “resting” in each future moment in order to be what you already are.

*My experience is that when I try to not label things, there is no success, in that the mind just goes ahead and does label, regardless of the intention. The closest I can get to not labeling is to recognize that Space which is simply aware, prior to and during, and even after the mind's conceptual overlay. In the basic invitation, it is my understanding that you are inviting me to de-emphasize, or don't chase after thought. In other words,*

*when a question comes up, rather than needing to have it answered, just watch it arise, along with whatever energy comes with that, (like the frustration of not having the answer), and then just allow it to take its course, go back to where it came from, while I remain, just noticing the process?*

Yes, that is another way of looking at the pointer “recognize present awareness and don’t move to manipulate appearances.” This space of awareness is here before, during, and after a thought or other appearance comes and goes within it. Simply noticing the coming and going of appearances (and by appearances I mean not only thoughts but also emotions, sensations, states, and experiences) we see that what notices those appearances is awareness, the unmoving, unchanging space itself. The point here is to not manipulate the appearances. This means to not analyze, neutralize, chase after, or try to get rid of the appearances, but rather to see them come and go within what you are—awareness. All of these appearances are happening spontaneously and involuntarily, including the movement of "chasing thoughts." Seeing these movements coming and going on their own allows us to realize our real identity as the space in which all of that is happening. It reveals that there is no separate self sense within us that has control of this flow of energy.

It is the recognition that you are this unchanging, unmoving space that is key. From that standpoint, it becomes easier to see that all appearances are inseparable from awareness—meaning they cannot appear outside awareness. They are appearances of awareness itself. Looking at it that way keeps us from believing that we must manipulate what appears. That which appears has no independent existence from the awareness within which it appears. To manipulate something would be to buy into a division between awareness and appearances within awareness. This division is not real.

Remember also that "trying" and "efforting" are appearances within awareness. This is what I mean by manipulating. There is an assumption that there is a central entity within us that can or that does manage all these appearances. But the thought that you must do something with appearances (and frankly that you must rest as awareness) is also just another appearance that comes and goes within awareness. However, resting as awareness can be helpful in the beginning. Ultimately, it is seen that your real identity is awareness and that appearances are already coming and going within what you are. This is a timeless seeing, not a doing in time that requires effort. Relax right now and see that what has been reading these words is already awake. Stick with that basic fact. These words, as well as all pointers, are simply coming and going within this awake space.

## CHAPTER TWO: Appearances (Generally)

The first key to Living Realization is found in the last chapter called “Recognizing Present Awareness.” Don’t skip over that chapter. In fact, stick with that chapter only for a while. Move to this chapter and the following chapters only when you are comfortable with the direct experience of what awareness is.

If awareness is our primary identity, then why even talk about appearances? The answer is that appearances are inseparable from awareness. They have no separate existence. They are movements of awareness itself. Many people report an oscillation (like a fan that moves left to right) between moments of recognizing pure, formless, non-conceptual awareness and moments in which appearances are predominant. This is a common report on the spiritual path. This oscillation comes from the notion that awareness is something separate from your everyday existence in which all sorts of thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences come and go. If you believe that awareness is some state in which you are free of these movements within awareness, you set yourself up for the oscillation. This oscillation is dualistic. It creates the notion that there is a split in reality between awareness and what appears within awareness. There is no such split. It is only the mind that believes this split is real. Appearances are not separate from awareness. Therefore, it is important to discuss what appearances are and how they are inseparable from the basic, unmoving, unchanging space of awareness.

This Chapter contains a general, introductory discussion of appearances. Each of the broad categories of appearances introduced in this Chapter will be more specifically discussed in later chapters.

Suffering, seeking, and conflict arise through clinging or identifying with appearances within awareness. This creates and maintains the sense of a separate self. In Living Realization, we are not trying to get rid of appearances or do anything with them. This is not about a project to get rid of the ego. We are simply recognizing that appearances are inseparable movements of awareness. In recognizing our identity as awareness, instead of believing that the appearances contain our identity, appearances are naturally allowed to come and go. The clinging and identifying energy relaxes naturally. Suffering, seeking, and conflict release themselves in that seeing. This is an effortless seeing. It does not involve personal will.

For purposes of this sharing, an appearance is *anything* that moves or changes or comes and goes within awareness. All appearances are temporary. Awareness is the pure, permanent, unchanging,

unmoving, spacious seeing within which the temporary appearances move and change, and come and go.

Appearances generally fall into at least one of the following categories: thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, or experiences. Below is a more detailed but non-exhaustive list of appearances. These categories are not rigid and we may find that some appearances fall within more than one category. Remember, the material in this Chapter is not meant to provide new information for us to memorize, learn, and remember. This material consists of tools that assist us in seeing that our real identity is present awareness and that appearances come and go inseparably within awareness.

**Thoughts:** thoughts, beliefs, ideas, interpretations, concepts, opinions, judgments, stories, spiritual concepts, identities, roles, and titles.

**Emotions:** fear, anxiety, worry, elation, happiness, resentment, anger, rage, grief, disgust, shame, guilt, sadness, despair, love, surprise.

**Sensations:** pain, pleasure, contraction, pressure, smelling, touching, tasting, hearing, seeing (visual), tingling.

**States:** waking, dreaming, deep sleep, drug-induced or altered state, egoic, witnessing, emptiness, fullness, conflict, confusion, doubt, uncertainty, certainty, relaxation, nervousness, peace, frustration, freedom, bondage, depression, excessive thinking, illness, boredom, and any other temporary mode or condition of being

**Experiences:** Too numerous to name. This literally includes the wide range of human experiences from going to the prom to sitting on the toilet. It is easier to define what the word experience means. Webster's Dictionary defines an "experience" as any event "personally encountered, undergone, or lived through."

Appearances are temporary movements that come and go within awareness. Appearances can never truly define or be what we are because of their temporary nature. To define yourself conceptually in any way is to identify with a fleeting image, an idea that rapidly comes and goes within awareness. In the same way, to define yourself through any appearance including an emotion, sensation, state, or experience is to do the same. Because of the temporary, fleeting nature of all appearances, they cannot provide the deepest, most authentic answer to the question, "Who am I?" The answer to that question is not found in any appearance. The answer reveals itself in the direct, immediate, timeless recognition of awareness as our real identity.

The metaphor of a movie on a theater screen is helpful to illustrate the invitation in Living Realization. Appearances are like the characters and scenes in a movie. Awareness is like the screen. Remember that, when we say awareness is like the screen, we do not mean that awareness is an object or appearance that we can see or find. Awareness is the pure seeing itself. It is like space itself without any boundary. That is what we are.

Suffering, conflict, and seeking happen when there is identification with the temporary appearances (i.e., the characters and scenes) coming and going on the screen of awareness. There is a constant looking for a sense of self in the temporary appearances. We are looking for permanency and stability. Yet these appearances do not hold our identity. They are fleeting and therefore incapable of providing stability. We want the characters and scenes to stop, to remain as fixed and permanent things, something we can personalize and hold onto. But they come and go so quickly just like the characters and scenes on the theater screen. It is impossible to hang onto any of them. And awareness has no agenda to try to hold onto them anyway. Awareness naturally allows these appearances to come and go, to be as they are, without any need to manipulate them or grasp at them.

Freedom is realized through recognizing awareness to be our real identity and seeing that the characters and scenes in the movie are appearances of awareness. In this recognition, the appearances are seen to come and go freely, temporarily, seamlessly, and inseparably within awareness. The appearances are movements within awareness. Awareness is what we are. It is perfectly stable. And the beautiful thing is that these movements are not separate from awareness. This inseparability is important so that we don't make the error in believing that the screen of awareness is trying to get rid of or manipulate the appearances on it. It simply does not have that agenda. Only thought does. And thought itself is nothing more than a temporary appearance on the screen.

The screen is the most fundamental aspect in the theater metaphor above. This is why we say that awareness is our real identity. Without the screen (i.e., awareness), there can be no characters or scenes (i.e., appearances). Yet, without the characters and scenes, there would be only the screen. There would be only awareness without anything appearing within it. This is why we say that appearances are not separate from awareness.

Another way of talking about awareness and appearances within awareness is by way of the distinction between internal and external appearances. Internal appearances are thoughts, emotions, sensations, and states. These are things we experience within what we call body and mind. External appearances include objects external to the body and mind such as chair, house, moon, apple, and road. Awareness itself is not any of these appearances, whether internal or external. The physical

object “road” is an appearance of awareness. It seems to appear “out there” in the world. But it cannot appear without awareness. The two are inseparable in that way. In other words, without awareness, the road cannot be seen. In the same way, a feeling of anger is an appearance of awareness. Anger cannot be experienced without awareness. It is inseparable from awareness. The energetic form within the body that we call “anger” never appears outside of awareness. Therefore, it is inseparable from awareness. Therefore, in Living Realization, we cannot know whether something exists except by its appearance. “To exist” is the same as “to appear” in Living Realization. We can only know a road exists if it appears. Similarly, we can only know anger is happening if it appears.

Awareness is not any of these appearances, internal or external. It is “farther” back, so to speak. It is the seeing itself. No matter what appearance comes and goes temporarily within awareness, there is still ‘something’ that sees the appearances. This is awareness. It does not come and go. Awareness is that which sees all appearances. Awareness is what you are. The word “road” and all other words pointing to apparently external objects happening outside the body and mind in an objectively separate world are actually thoughts appearing internally. In other words, the thought “road” and any mental image that appears in conjunction with the thought are occurring within what we call the mind. So, what appears as a world of objectively distinct objects “out there” are creations of thought “in here.” Stated another way, a chair is known to exist only when we see the apparent physical object “out there in the world” and the thought “chair” appears within the mind simultaneously.

Now take an even closer look at what is happening. The notions of “internal” and “external,” “out there,” “in here,” “awareness,” “appearances,” “body,” and “mind” are all just thoughts appearing and disappearing within the actual awareness (not the thought) that you are. This is the awareness that is looking at these words right now. All concepts that appear and disappear in the awareness that is looking right now give the appearance that the world is divided into separate things. But the separation is a product of thought. It isn’t real. In this seeing, separation between what you call you and what you call the world is seen through. All appearances are appearances of awareness. And even that distinction is conceptual. All is. No separation.

Living Realization is not about passively witnessing appearances as if awareness is somehow separate from what appears within awareness. It is not about being “spaced out” or stuck in emptiness. It is the recognition that our real identity is the present, spacious awareness within which everything is happening. In this seeing, the division between the space and what is happening in the space is seen to be non-existent. Awareness and whatever appearance is happening within awareness right now are “not two.”

We are also not inviting you to get rid of anything. The invitation here is to not manipulate or do anything with any appearance. In the recognition of awareness, every appearance is *naturally* allowed to be exactly as it is. The sense of being a separate self—and any personal suffering and seeking or interpersonal conflict resulting from identification with appearances—is ‘seen through’ in this recognition. As these appearances are allowed to arise and fall within present awareness, without any movement to manipulate or change them, it is realized that awareness is already effortlessly accepting of everything that appears and disappears in awareness. Every appearance is seen to come and go within awareness, leaving no trace. This is perfect acceptance of everything.

Acceptance is not something we do as persons “trying to accept” situations and people in our lives. Acceptance is a natural by-product of recognizing our real identity. In that recognition, every character and every scene in the movie of life is allowed to be just as they are.

**Keep it simple: Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate the appearances of awareness. See that the appearances are not separate from awareness.**

## CHAPTER THREE:

### Appearances (Thoughts)

We are still in the discussion of appearances. Thoughts are the focus of this Chapter. Remember that we defined an “appearance” in Chapter Two as any temporary thing that moves or changes or comes and goes within awareness. Thoughts are clearly appearances of awareness. Let’s revisit the category of thoughts that was introduced in Chapter Two:

**Thoughts:** thoughts, beliefs, ideas, interpretations, concepts, opinions, judgments, stories, spiritual concepts, identities, roles, and titles.

#### **The Triangle of the Simulated Self**

There are many discussions about thoughts throughout this text. But let’s start with the basics. Living Realization calls the sense of a separate self, “the simulated self.” We choose this definition so that we can look at the separate self for what it is. It is a dream-like simulation appearing in what you really are—present awareness. This simulated self is not our real identity. In Living Realization, we define the simulated self as more than just the “I” thought. It is more than just thought and emotion. In fact, it is an entire physical and emotional contraction supporting a time-bound, thought-based story.

The very root of this simulated self is the “I” thought. If you trace the thought “I” back to its present source, it is revealed that your true essence is not a thought at all. It is more like a non-conceptual present awareness that is inseparably awake to the present moment, looking at life without any labels. For some, this simple invitation is all that is needed. One quick investigation to find the root of the “I” thought reveals that there is no separate “I” there. In fact, there is no root either. There is no object. There is no concept. There is nothing. There is only a clear, spacious, present seeing in which everything appears and disappears. It is a seeing in which everything is seen. And no appearance can be seen without the seeing itself. This is why we say that appearances are inseparable from awareness itself. The non-conceptual awareness that is repeatedly pointed to in this text is closer to your real identity than anything that appears in awareness including the “I” thought.

Although the root of the simulated self is the “I” thought, the simulated self is more involved than that. Living Realization uses the

term, “the triangle of the simulated self,” to describe the entire conceptual apparatus of the separate self including what it is made of and what it does. The word “triangle” points to three bundles of thought: past, future, and present resistance. The simulated self is created and maintained through identifying with and emphasizing the thoughts within these three bundles, instead of recognizing awareness in every situation.

### *The Past Bundle*

The past is considered “who you are.” This bundle of thoughts includes everything you know conceptually about who you are and what life is. More specifically, this bundle includes your name, your identity, details about your family and childhood, your education, history, the roles you play, the titles you wear, and all other aspects of your personal story. This bundle includes all political, religious, spiritual and other ideas, opinions, and beliefs you hold, all of which are also part of your story whether you see it or not. This bundle includes any mental identification you have as a member of a group. When you say, “I am a Christian,” “I am a Muslim,” “I am a scientist,” “I am an American,” or “I am a Russian,” these are all concepts with which awareness is identifying.

This past bundle includes all your ideas about the world and reality itself. Simply stated, it is anything that apparently happened in the past or any idea that was formed in the past but that has now been reduced to a memory (i.e., a thought) and become a part of the conceptual story called “me and my life.”

The only real point here is that these are all concepts. Everything you think about yourself is just that . . . a thought. It is a representation, a sign. All signs are pointing back to and appearing and disappearing within your real identity, which is present awareness. If you visited Texas, you would not walk up to the “Welcome to Texas” sign and claim adamantly that the sign is Texas itself. The sign is only a sign. It represents or points to something. In the same way, every concept within the past bundle represents or points to something. It points to your real identity, which is present awareness. You would not confuse the “Welcome to Texas” sign with the actual Texas. In the same way, Living Realization invites you to stop looking to past concepts for a sense of who or what you presently are. Instead, simply take a moment right now, or any other time throughout the day when it is convenient, and recognize that which is looking, which is awareness itself.

You feel a sense of separation from others and from the rest of life because you continuously rely on and emphasize thoughts from within the past bundle. You look to memory for a sense of self. This memory consists of signs or images. These signs or images are more like reflections of what you are. They are things that appear and disappear

within what you really are—awareness. This separation creates an identity surrounding a sense of lack. From this sense of lack, there is a desire to find completion. This results in looking into future for that completion, which we will talk about in the section below.

The point here is that there is nothing to analyze, know, neutralize, overcome, figure out, get rid of, understand, or do with any of the thoughts that appear from the past bundle. Just recognize that they are all concepts. You are not a concept. As each thought arises, simply notice it. In noticing, you don't let go of the thought. It falls away naturally on its own, resolving itself back into present awareness. Notice that what is looking is present awareness. That is what you really are. The recognition of that present awareness is an end in and of itself. It resolves the identity crisis completely. You are this present awareness. It is that simple. No concept can be what you are because all concepts appear within what you are.

### *The Future Bundle*

The future is considered “who you are going to become.” This bundle of thoughts includes everything you know or think you know conceptually about the future “you.” More specifically, this bundle includes stories about the next moment, tomorrow, next week, next year, and the rest of your life. Simply stated, it is anything that you believe needs to happen in the future for you to be at peace or anything that you fear will happen in the future that will threaten your sense of self.

This bundle includes thoughts of future fulfillment with regard to relationships, jobs, career, material items, fame, prestige, attention, praise, acknowledgement, and seeking pleasurable fixes through drugs, alcohol, tobacco, eating, shopping, sex or gambling. It includes thoughts of future spiritual awakening also. All of these concepts fall under the umbrella of hope. The central, mostly unconscious, fuel behind each idea surrounding hope is as follows: I hope X will happen. If X happens, I will be ok.

The future bundle is not only about hope. The flipside of hope is fear. The future bundle also includes any fearful thoughts about the future including failure, suffering, and death. The central, mostly unconscious, fuel behind each idea surrounding fear is as follows: I fear that Y will happen. If Y happens, I will be threatened or will die.

The point here is that there is nothing to analyze, know, neutralize, overcome, figure out, get rid of, understand, or do with any of the thoughts that appear from the future bundle, regardless of whether the thoughts surround the notion of hope or fear. Just recognize that they are all concepts. You are not a concept. By continuously entertaining the future bundle, the simulated self is being maintained. This self feels separate and looks to future for completion. But completion cannot be found in time. Time is merely another thought. In other words, there is

no way to entertain the notion of a next moment, a tomorrow, a next month, or a next year without thinking. Each of those are merely concepts appearing and disappearing within present awareness, which is what you really are.

As each thought about the future appears, simply notice it. In noticing, you don't let go of the thought. It falls away naturally on its own, resolving itself effortlessly back into present awareness. Every manifest thing in the universe—including thought—has a temporary life span. Noticing just means noticing that all thoughts of future appear and disappear within present awareness. In noticing the thoughts, notice that what is looking is present awareness. That is what you are. Recognizing that you are is what is looking in the here and now and not any of the appearances that are coming and going (i.e., the concepts) resolves the identity crisis completely. The search for future ends right now, in this seeing.

### *The Present Resistance Bundle*

The third bundle of thoughts within the triangle is the present resistance bundle. This includes any mental interpretations of the present moment, especially those that are in resistance to your present experience including blaming, complaining, judging, comparing, and any other thought that makes it appear that something that is happening now ought not to be happening.

The point here is that there is nothing to analyze, know, neutralize, overcome, figure out, get rid of, understand, or do with any of the thoughts that appear from the present resistance bundle. Just recognize that they are all concepts. You are not a concept. By continuously entertaining thoughts from this bundle, the simulated self is maintained. This simulated self is fueled by continuously resisting, through mental interpretation, what is happening in the present moment.

As each thought of present resistance appears, simply notice it. In noticing, you don't let go of the thought. It falls away naturally. Notice that what is looking is present awareness. Present awareness is what you are. In recognizing present awareness, you see that awareness is naturally and effortlessly accepting of whatever is happening right now. You also see that whatever is happening is an appearance within awareness. You see that no appearance can appear without awareness. This is the seeing that appearances are inseparable from awareness. This is the true meaning of acceptance.

### **Witnessing Thought**

With respect to all three bundles mentioned above, this is not about getting trapped in an ongoing process of witnessing. It is not about creating a duality between the witness and the appearances that

are seen. Living Realization invites you to see that you are the awareness within which all thoughts *inseparably* appear and disappear. The thought is not separate from awareness itself. These thoughts are happening within awareness. They are the movement of awareness itself. Awareness is not a thing. It is the awake space within which thoughts happen. Therefore, these thoughts are happening to no one, which is to say that the separate self that you take yourself to be is, in fact, not real. This is why we call it a simulation. Therefore, any other concept about a separate witness who witnesses life and is somehow separate from what is happening is just another story within the past bundle of thoughts. It is yet another concept that awareness has identified with. By simply noticing that thought, it falls away. That which notices the thought, "I am the separate witness" is what you really are—awareness. These thoughts appear inseparably within what you are. There is no self separate from life. There is only life itself. You are THAT. In that recognition, when the personal self is seen through, there is a natural care and compassion for life itself including all sentient beings.

### **Questions and Answers**

*Is the intellect an obstacle to the recognition of present awareness?*

It sure can appear that the intellect is an obstacle to the recognition of awareness. But it appears that way only because there is a sense of self invested in the intellect. As we stated in the paragraph above regarding the past bundle, we often identify with our intellect, believing it to hold the key to our real identity. Much of our search through philosophy, religion, science, and spirituality and many other intellectual pursuits are based on an underlying desire to answer questions like, "Who am I?" and "What is life?" These are questions revolving around the idea of identity. In recognizing present awareness as our real identity, the identity crisis is solved fully and finally. It is also seen that awareness is the same as space itself. Can the intellect harm space? Of course the intellect cannot harm space. No appearance can harm awareness. So the intellect cannot harm or obstruct what you are. The intellect is an amazing appearance within what you are. It is not to be denied or repressed. Who would do that? In that seeing, there may be a great desire to read and study philosophy, religion, science, spirituality, or some other intellectual pursuit or there may be no desire to do any of that. In any event, in the recognition of awareness, there is no longer a need to look for the answer to the question, "Who am I?" in any appearance, including in any intellectual pursuit.

*Does thought obscure awareness?*

Again, it can appear that there are things that obscure or obstruct awareness. But remember the central invitation in Living Realization: Recognize awareness right now. Do not move to manipulate any appearance. See that the appearances are not separate from awareness. Thoughts are appearances of awareness. Appearances cannot happen without awareness. In other words, there is no way for a thought to appear without the screen of awareness on which it appears. Rather than obscuring or obstructing awareness, thought actually proves that awareness is here. See that every thought comes and goes temporarily within awareness, yet no thought is awareness itself.

*What should I do to get rid of my ego or "simulated self" as you call it?*

In Living Realization, we don't move to get rid of ego. This is about a seeing, a realization. In this seeing, whatever it is that is not your true identity will be *seen through* naturally in the recognition of awareness. This is not about personal will. Don't make ego death your project. It's a project that only the ego would be interested in.

*The basic invitation invites us to "not manipulate appearances." Doesn't this place us in a situation in which we do nothing? A place of detachment, complacency, and nihilism? If there is no self, why give a damn at all? The world was built on doing. Things only get done when I think about them and take action. You seem to be advocating laziness.*

This comes from a misunderstanding. It comes from relying on thought or mental viewpoints to understand awareness or understand or predict what it would be like in the future if you were to recognize awareness. That is not the recognition of awareness, which is our ever present identity.

When there is identification with thought, you believe you are this thought-based self. You believe this thought-based self is acting autonomously as if this self can set itself apart from the rest of life and be in control of all future outcomes and make the other parts (i.e., selves and things) react a certain way and do certain things. For most people, this attempt at control doesn't work. It can, in fact, cause great suffering. Separation is the root of suffering.

In the story of self, some plans and attempts at controlling future outcomes seem to work out the way we would like them to. Other times, they don't seem to work out at all. Everyone has the right to continue believing that his or her identity resides in and as this thought-based self. No one is required to be interested in the recognition of awareness. You can go on living life from the sense of a personal will that tries to bring about future outcomes.

But when we begin to be interested in the experiential recognition of awareness as our real identity, this opens the door to a totally new

possibility. In the recognition of awareness, we see that personal will and the attempts at control are just thoughts appearing and disappearing in present awareness. They have no power of their own. They are all based in the false assumption that there is a central, separate entity within us that can manage the various appearances in life (thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences). We come to see that this is not the case. These appearances come and go on their own. They have a life of their own. Life is living itself. We are not individuals who can set ourselves apart from life and act autonomously. We are not individual, separate managers of life who act completely independently of the rest of life.

In seeing through that separate self sense, the self-centeredness that comes with it is also seen through. We naturally stop acting from this place of self-centeredness, this place of trying to control outcomes, gain personal gratification, and fixate on personal stories. As this self is seen through, we realize that awareness has a natural wisdom that is not self-centered. We become interested, naturally, in being of service to others. We don't even insist that there are no others as a belief. Awareness is not about relying on beliefs. There is a knowing that there are no others and then, paradoxically, we become interested in being of service anyway. The mind trying to figure that out will only confuse itself. This is why it is important to keep awareness on the experiential level, rather than trying to understand it. No one understands awareness. It isn't a thought. It is what we are. We cannot understand what we are. We can only recognize and be what we are.

In the recognition of awareness, life continues unfolding. We don't sit on our couches in some belief about "non-doing" or "there is no one and nothing to do." Those are ideas that come and go in awareness just as "I'm a separate person who does things and controls outcomes" is an idea that comes and goes within awareness. Ideas continue arising in the recognition of awareness, but we are not interested in treating ideas as "truth" anymore. There is no reason to rely on them anymore. We identify with thought only when we believe our identity can be found there. In seeing that our identity is awareness, we stop looking for absolute truth and identity in thought.

And so a wisdom, love, peace, freedom, and compassion that is not based in identification with ideas, but rather is based in the recognition of awareness itself, begins to reveal itself naturally. We then get the sense that we are being lived rather than separate selves in charge and in control. This is not an attitude of laziness, complacency, or nihilism. In some respects, there is more responsibility than ever, because the self-centeredness is seen through. Laziness, complacency, and nihilism are all viewpoints of the separate self. They come from believing that awareness is something separate from the world, something we escape into so that we can leave all responsibility behind. Many get caught in that trap. Awareness is not about escape. It is not about detachment. It

takes a separate person to detach itself from the world. The world has no separate existence from awareness. The world is a set of appearances and these appearances can never appear separate from awareness. The world is awareness and awareness is the world. This seeing reveals that the recognition of awareness is not about complacency and self-centered detachment or non-doing. Doing continues on, without the self-centeredness behind it.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate thoughts. Don't move to get rid of the separate, simulated self. See that thoughts and this simulated self are inseparable appearances of what you really are—awareness.**

## CHAPTER FOUR: Appearances (Emotions)

Emotions are appearances of awareness. There is no way to experience an emotion without awareness. This is why we say that awareness and emotions are not separate.

Like all appearances, emotions come and go temporarily. The emotions that are appearing today are different than those that appeared ten days or ten years ago. If emotions stick around, that means they are being “carried over” in time. To suffer is to carry something over in time, to make it part of the time-bound story of self. Awareness is our primary identity. Suffering happens when there is personal identification with whatever emotion is appearing and when the emotion is not allowed to follow its natural course. Its natural course is to appear and disappear fully, openly, uninterrupted, and naturally within present awareness. This natural flow is seemingly disrupted as awareness contracts around the emotion, creating and maintaining the sense of a separate self (i.e., the “simulated self”) that is suffering in time.

We tend to hold onto or focus on emotions that we perceive as “good” and resist those that we deem to be “bad.” We spend a lot of time and energy trying to recreate the emotions we want and trying to get rid of the ones we don’t want. This constant movement towards good and comfortable feelings, and away from bad and uncomfortable feelings, is the spiritual search itself. In Living Realization, we define the spiritual search, very simply, as wanting something to happen other than what is happening now. This constant resistance to what is solidifies the simulated self that lives in time and believes its salvation or freedom is in the future rather than here and now.

In the story of the simulated self on a spiritual search, emotions are turned into a problem—something to eradicate, analyze, get rid of, or manipulate in some way. It may be helpful to see that emotions arise in conjunction with thoughts within one of the three bundles discussed earlier in the Triangle of the False Self. For example, the past bundle of thoughts may carry corresponding emotions of resentment, shame, guilt or some other movement or emotion. The present resistance bundle may carry anger or frustration. And the future bundle may carry fear or anxiety. But seeing that emotions arise in conjunction with thoughts is enough. No further analysis or manipulation is needed. That which sees each emotion is awareness and awareness is our real identity. That simple recognition is sufficient.

Insight arises from seeing that emotions are appearances within what we are. They are not what we are. For example, in the moment

fear arises, you can bet that some future threatening thought is appearing. That seeing is enough. Don't move to analyze the thought or manipulate the emotion. Just notice the thought and recognize that what is looking is spacious awareness. In recognizing awareness, the raw energy of the feeling can be felt directly without the mental label "fear," "anger," or "shame." Awareness is the space from which the emotion seamlessly appears and disappears. Awareness has no agenda to get rid of or manipulate the emotion. Only a thought would seek to get rid of or manipulate an emotion. The emotion is not separate from awareness. The emotion is not happening to a "me." The sense of "me" is just another appearance of awareness. It is the time-bound, thought-based simulated self we discussed earlier in this text. The thought "me" is a temporary appearance. Emotions happen within awareness. Stated another way, emotions arise and fall to no one. There is no person there to carry the emotion over "in time" and therefore to suffer. There is only space. Space naturally allows everything to be just as it is.

In Living Realization, the invitation is not to reach a state where nothing comes through or where all emotions, good or bad, are gone. Again, emotions are none other than the movement of awareness itself. Just as with thoughts, there is nothing to analyze, get rid of, manipulate or do with any of the emotions that appear and disappear. Everything is allowed to be exactly as it is. Everything is seen to be a seamless appearance of awareness. In fact, even when there is a movement to analyze, get rid of, manipulate, or do something with an emotion, that movement is also seen to be a seamless appearance of awareness. It is allowed to be completely. The "person," which is the time-bound, thought-based self, cannot truly allow or accept emotions. Spacious awareness naturally allows and accepts emotions because space is inseparable from the emotion itself. Emotion has no separate existence from space itself. Therefore, in the deepest sense, everything just is. That recognition ends the need to do something with emotions. It reveals that the person who is on a spiritual search is not a real entity. The simulated self is just that . . . a simulation that arises from a misperception of what we really are.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate emotions. See that emotions are not separate from awareness.**

## CHAPTER FIVE:

# Appearances (Sensations)

Sensations are also temporary appearances of awareness. For purposes of Living Realization, sensations are placed into two categories: (1) the five senses and (2) physical sensations.

In the most rudimentary sense, we experience the physical world through touching, tasting, seeing, hearing, and smelling. We tend to overemphasize thinking about sensory experience and underemphasize sense perception itself. For example, we tend to think about the weather with ideas such as, “Today is a wet, dreary day,” or “I hope tomorrow will be sunny,” rather than simply feeling the present sensory experience directly in whatever way that is appearing, either as the actual wetness of rain falling on our faces or the actual heat of the sun warming our bodies. To know a sunny day directly is to experience the heat and the light of the sun directly rather than through the label, “This is a sunny day.” The label is, at best, a representation. It is a thought. The actual warmth and light of the sun is not conceptual. In Living Realization, we are not saying that you shouldn’t think about the weather. We are simply pointing to the obvious fact that all appearances—including all thoughts and sensations—are equal appearances of awareness. In recognizing awareness as our real identity, the tendency to identify exclusively with mental labels relaxes.

We can think about water all we want, and even write a book about it, but to know water directly is to put our hands in it and feel its wetness. The mental label “water” will never provide that direct experience. We can never drink the idea, “Water.” A label will never quench our thirst. The same is true for every aspect of our world. To know tapioca pudding is to feel its texture in our mouths and taste its sweet flavor as it slides effortlessly down our throats. Reading the recipe for tapioca pudding or thinking about pudding will never provide that direct experiencing. The same is true for Living Realization. The phrase “Living Realization” is just a concept, as are words like “non-duality,” “enlightenment,” and “spiritual awakening.” But when we drop the concept and simply look at our present reality, the way it is really happening, we see that what we are in the deepest sense is a vast, loving, spacious awareness and that all appearances seamlessly appear and disappear within awareness. The direct experiencing of that, without heavy reliance on concepts, reveals what the phrase “Living Realization” is really pointing to. It is pointing to the simple fact that what you are is boundless, timeless space itself, recognizing itself equally as every appearance, every thought, every emotion, every sensation, and every experience.

The simulated self stays in place through looking at life only through a conceptual veil. By living only through these labels, we fragment life into separate occurrences: “I love this view from the mountaintop;” “I don’t like the sound of the car alarm going off;” and “the feel of this bug crawling up my leg is really ‘bugging’ me.” These labels create and maintain a false center (i.e., the simulated self) that is judging each and every sensory experience. It is all about “me” and whether life is giving “me” the experience I think I need or want in order to be a fulfilled separate self. This self is either for or against everything it sees, touches, tastes, hears, and smells. We live through stories of what sensory experiences mean for “me,” rather than through the bare naked, actual sensory experiencing itself.

It is very easy to create a story about how present physical sensations such as pain or discomfort should not be happening or how we have been suffering with pain or discomfort for a long time. In this way, we suffer. We “carry over” sensations through time. But time is thought. And all thought is an appearance of awareness. So carrying over sensations through time just means that we overemphasize our stories about the sensations. The resistance created through that storytelling strengthens the time-bound simulated self that is seeking future release. Conversely, this simulated self engages in a game of maintaining or recreating pleasurable sensations, whether it is the feel of a massage, comfort from food, the high from spiritual experiences, or the egoic boost from receiving praise and acknowledgment.

The spiritual search is a search for something more, for the next moment. It is a chase after future pleasure or release and an avoidance of present pain or discomfort. The simulated self is chained to this duality of pleasure v. pain—this movement of chasing pleasure and avoiding pain.

As sensory experiences such as pleasure and pain are seen as nothing more than movements within present awareness itself, they are allowed to appear and disappear naturally. They are no longer being focused on and carried over into the story of self that lives in time. Our true identity is revealed in this seeing. Everything is naturally allowed, both pleasure and pain, both the beautiful view from the mountaintop and the annoying sound of the car alarm. Awareness simply has no agenda to resist. It naturally accepts what appears because the appearance itself is not separate from that space that sees it. Sensations are not separate from awareness. Awareness does not move toward or away from any sensation. In this seeing, the constant movements of chasing pleasure and avoiding pain tend to relax on their own.

### *The Self-Contraction*

The simulated self is not just a thought-based, time-bound story. It is also not just emotional in nature. It is physical. The self-contraction is

the tense, seemingly solid, physical energy knot within the body that creates a real sense of separation between “me” and the rest of life. The self-contraction is located in any number of areas including the stomach, chest, throat, behind the eyes, and even in parts of the head. The knot may be in more than one area simultaneously.

The self-contraction, as real as it seems, is also just a temporary appearance of awareness. It feels permanent only because we have assumed all our lives that we are in fact separate selves. Until we hear the invitation to investigate whether this contraction is our real identity, we simply assume that it is. Take a moment now and investigate this assumption. Find the physical contraction(s) in the body. Where is the dense energy located? Where does it feel like there is a solid, separate you? Do you see that the self-contraction, regardless of where it is, appears within awareness? Your real identity is that which is awake to the contraction. If *you* can find the contraction as an appearance, it must not be *you*. It must be an appearance in what you are.

No amount of effort or resistance against the contraction will diminish the contraction. The contraction is the energy of separation and resistance itself. Resistance cannot eradicate resistance. Only the simulated self would seek to be rid of the contraction anyway.

The only practice here is to recognize present, spacious awareness and to notice that space gently surrounds and permeates the contraction. Remember that the invitation here is never to manipulate an appearance. The contraction, like all appearances, is “of awareness.” There is actually no separation between awareness and the contraction. It’s all energy in different forms. In simply recognizing awareness, it is revealed that the contraction is not you. That seeing reveals your real identity as awareness itself. The contraction tends to fall away effortlessly and naturally in that seeing.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate sensations. See that sensations are not separate from awareness.**



## CHAPTER SIX: Appearances (States)

One of the greatest myths is that spiritual awakening involves reaching, maintaining, or recreating a particular state, whether it's a state of peace, bliss, non-conceptualization, silence, or some other state. Continuing to view spiritual awakening in this way perpetuates seeking as the mind attempts to seek comfortable states and avoid uncomfortable states.

Living Realization is the recognition that your primary identity is present awareness. Awareness is the permanent, unchanging, unmoving opening through which each and every temporary state comes and goes. The key here is that every state is temporary, no matter how spiritual or unspiritual the state appears to be.

States are appearances. We suffer and seek when there is identification with and emphasis on certain states and avoidance, dismissal, or escape from other states. This results in a time-bound cycle of dualistic seeking. In this cycle, our happiness seems so elusive. We always want to feel different, better, freer, or more at peace. We don't see that the very seeking after future states makes the present moment feel as though it is lacking.

Living Realization defines the spiritual search very simply as wanting something to happen other than what is happening now. Virtually everyone in the world is on a spiritual search, whether they realize it or not. One definition of the simulated self is "the constant movement towards future for a sense of completion." Regardless of whether we have been seeking spiritual awakening for years or have been engaged in seeking happiness in material items, career, attention, fame, relationships, food, sex, drugs, or anything else, this basic fact remains: to seek any state other than the one that is appearing now is to continue in the story of the time-bound, thought-based simulated self.

As we stated earlier, there are many different kinds of temporary states including but not limited to the following: waking, dreaming, deep sleep, drug-induced or altered state, witnessing, emptiness, fullness, conflict, confusion, doubt, calmness, agitation, enthusiasm, uncertainty, certainty, relaxation, nervousness, peace, elation, frustration, freedom, bondage, depression, excessive thinking, non-conceptualization, illness, boredom, and any other temporary mode or condition of being.

As with all appearances, there is nothing to manipulate, get rid of, maintain, seek, recreate or do with regard to any state that appears. States are temporary appearances of awareness. They are not separate

from awareness. To say that they are not separate just means that it is impossible to experience a state without awareness.

Living Realization is not about merely witnessing states in some detached way. To be detached, there must be a person who is separate from the state and who feels detached from the state. In recognizing awareness as your real identity, the division between the space and what is happening in the space is seen to be non-existent. There is no separate you bringing the state about. It simply appears. There is also no separate you who can control or bring about the end of the state. It simply disappears. In this seeing, every state is allowed to be by no one.

In this recognition, there is only the state that is happening. There is no movement to resist what is happening. And if a movement to resist a state arises, that movement is also completely seen and allowed to be. To want to suppress or escape a presently-arising state or seek or recreate a future state is to try to block the natural, effortless, creative, and loving movement of life itself.

### **The Oscillation**

One of the most common traps in the spiritual search is what Living Realization calls the “oscillation.” In seeing through the simulated self, we experience moments, even sustained periods, of peace, joy, freedom, calmness, love, or bliss. During these states there is a sense of “I’ve got it.” The mind unconsciously associates these states with spiritual awakening. Whenever the mind dualistically labels anything in this way, it polarizes the opposite states. Therefore, in the moment a painful or less desirable state arises such as frustration, confusion, doubt, or boredom, there is a sense of “I’ve lost it.” There is a movement to recreate or seek the previous, desirable state. We then go looking for our lost freedom or peace. The spiritual search continues as an oscillation between moments of peace or freedom and moments of confusion, doubt, or separation.

As with all appearances, the invitation here is to recognize present awareness as your real identity. Positive and negative, and spiritual and unspiritual, states appear in what you are. They are not what you are. In this recognition, it is seen that the oscillation is happening in awareness. It is not true that we are moving in and out of enlightenment or awakening. All that is happening is that states are appearing and disappearing in what we are—present awareness. That recognition tends to quiet the oscillation.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate states. Don’t go chasing future states. Don’t try to recreate past states. Don’t escape present, uncomfortable states. See that states are not**

**separate from awareness. They effortlessly come and go within  
unmoving, unchanging awareness.**

## CHAPTER SEVEN:

# Appearances (Experiences)

Experiences are appearances of awareness. Remember that, in Living Realization, an appearance is defined as anything that comes and goes. Experiences come and go, no matter how good or bad they are perceived to be. We suffer and seek through focusing on past experiences for a sense of self, constantly labeling and resisting present experiences, and seeking future experiences for a completion of that sense of self.

There is no way to list all possible experiences. Essentially every event that happens in life is an experience from visiting the doctor, to eating red velvet cake, to sleeping, to going to work, to taking a vacation. Rather than trying to list all possible experiences, we rely on Webster's Dictionary definition, which states that an "experience" is any event "personally encountered, undergone, or lived through."

The operative word in that definition is "personally." Thought refers and clings to experiences from the past bundle to strengthen and maintain the simulated self. So the story goes: "I received my doctorate degree in 1999," "I got married in 2002;" "I had a powerful spiritual awakening in 2003;" or "Yesterday, I finally saw a positive change in my relationship." Thought labels present experiences as good or bad, often resisting what is happening now. So the story goes: "She shouldn't speak to me in that manner;" "I'm tired of being here at work;" or "This conversation is boring." By labeling and resisting present experiences, thought then looks to future for completion: "Tomorrow will be better because I have the day off;" "I hope they make me CEO of the company one day;" or "I will be better when I have an enlightenment experience."

In Living Realization, we do not say that experiences or memories of experiences are bad or that you should stop having experiences or memories. That would be impossible anyway. We simply invite you to see that experiences appear from and disappear back into awareness, that awareness is your real, unchanging identity, and that focusing on experiences for a sense of self is the cause of suffering and seeking. Enjoy the experiences fully. Celebrate them! But also see that every experience is temporary. There is nothing to hold onto. There is wonderful freedom in that seeing.

The invitation in Living Realization is to simply recognize awareness as any experience is happening and see that the experience is a temporary appearance of awareness. We do not move to change, manipulate, get rid of, or do anything with experience. Yet if any of those movements arise, we see that the movements are also appearances of awareness. Even movements to manipulate experiences are allowed to

be just as they are. These movements are not manipulated in any way either. We don't choose any appearances. They simply appear and disappear. All that we can do is notice that.

In this seeing, no experience is held onto, every experience is allowed to come and go effortlessly, naturally resolving itself back into spacious awareness.

An important point is that experiences are appearances *of* awareness. We are not inviting you to passively witness experiences. This sets up a duality between the witness and the experience that is happening. Awareness and the experience happening in awareness are not separate. This seeing reveals that our freedom is always present, because it is a natural attribute of present awareness itself, regardless of what experience is appearing.

### **Spiritual Experiences**

We hear stories of teachers and others who have had various spiritual experiences including Oneness experiences, experiences of nothingness, no self, light and luminosity, unconditional love and bliss, Kundalini or chakra awakenings, seeing God, hearing God, touching God, and any number of other experiences. Or we—ourselves—may have had one or more of these experiences in the past.

These experiences can be beautiful. Enjoy them totally if they occur. But each experience is temporary, no matter how spiritual or unspiritual it is perceived to be. Living Realization is not about having a particular experience. It is not about a person who is separate from an experience, having the experience. And it is not about a witness witnessing an experience. Living Realization is about space being whatever experience is presently happening in that space. The space and the experience are “not two.”

Awareness permeates every experience, no matter whether it is a spiritual experience full of love and peace or the experience of arguing with your spouse. To look at reality any other way sets up a duality where one seeks after certain pleasurable or comfortable experiences and pushes away other painful or uncomfortable experiences.

To seek after certain spiritual experiences as told by teachers or others is to reduce those experiences to concepts and then chase after those concepts, believing that the concepts will provide freedom. But concepts are not the source of freedom. Awareness is already free. Even when we have certain pleasurable spiritual experiences, there is no need to try to recreate those past experiences. To chase after memory is just more seeking.

True freedom, peace, love, wisdom, and joy are inherent aspects of awareness itself. Awareness is ever present. This is the wonderful news of Living Realization. Never again is our sense of well-being dependent on having certain experiences and avoiding other experiences. We are

not individual selves living in time, defining ourselves by past experiences, and looking to enhance this selfhood through the attainment of future experiences. Our real identity is the present space in which all appearances (i.e., experiences) come and go. And the appearances are not separate from that space.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate experiences (this means don't emphasize thoughts about past or future experiences). Awareness is not an experience. See that experiences come and go within awareness and are inseparable from it.**

### **Question and Answer**

*In reading this basic invitation and these last chapters on appearances, this question arises for me: For one person, awareness appears as poverty and lack. For another person, awareness appears as wealth and abundance. How do you reconcile that? Is the answer that it is what it is? You get the appearances that you get? It seems like there is no choice in the matter. Is choice involved in Living Realization? Seems like it isn't. Am I missing something?*

The recognition of awareness reveals complete wealth, contentment and well-being not dependent on any circumstance, appearance, condition, or life situation that comes and goes within awareness. It is available to everyone because it is our real identity. It is not something we own or that appears for us and then disappears. It is not just for the rich or the poor, the attractive or the unattractive. It's not here only when there is money or good fortune. It is unconditional, unmovable, unchangeable. It is what we are.

The recognition of awareness is a stable and permanent seeing that our real identity cannot be found in appearances. It is what is presently awake. It's so simple that it is being overlooked the moment we move to manipulate a question like "Is there choice?" When the question is just allowed to be as it is, without trying to analyze it, the question falls away, and we see that what is looking is what we are. This provides the well-being we are looking for IN the question. I invite you to look to where the words are pointing rather than going back to mental viewpoints about choice v. no choice. What happens when you answer the question, "Is there choice?" You have an intellectual answer, that is all. If the intellect were the key to freedom every scientist, professor, lawyer, doctor, philosopher and scholar would be free. It is not the key. The intellect is just a tool, an appearance within what we are--awareness.

The words of the basic invitation are pointing to the fact that your real identity is like pure, boundary-less space. It cannot be destroyed or created. It is not affected by the many appearances that come and go within it. Appearances like monetary wealth or poverty, good and bad days, sickness and health, ups and downs, all come and go within awareness. They cannot move awareness in any way. Awareness is the unmoving, unchanging aspect of your present experience. It is the only aspect of your experience that is always there. It is present awakens itself. Always here, always present. Appearances come and go.

The appearances are like the rays of the sun. Awareness is like the sun. No single ray can define, destroy, or move the sun. The sun of awareness shines always. The rays are merely inseparable appearances of it. They burn out, fade away, grow larger and smaller, but the sun shines radiantly always.

This very basic recognition of awareness has been overlooked in favor of emphasizing temporary appearances that come and go within awareness. We've been emphasizing the rays rather than recognizing we are the sun. In the belief in being a separate self, there is a constant movement to cling to or manipulate appearances (money, pleasure, attention, relationships, sex, career, material things). These things can certainly appear and disappear. But we are trying to define ourselves by them. We cannot find what we are in these things. Emphasizing appearances overlooks a fundamental fact which is that what we are has never been and will never be moved or affected in any way by what appears on its screen. What we are—awareness—simply does not come and go.

In the belief that we are these embodied individual entities, rather than awareness itself, we carry this notion that if appearances in our lives are favorable, we are ok, and if appearances in our lives are not favorable, we are not ok. This is a conditioned existence that can never really provide the ongoing, indestructible well-being and contentment available in awareness. We then may entertain the notion, "It's just my lot in life" because I'm poor or unattractive. These are just passing thoughts in awareness. Nothing more! They come and go like flashes of light in the night sky. They have no more power than that. We give them power by emphasizing them. When they are allowed to come and go without being manipulated or analyzed, they come to rest in what we are—awareness. And awareness is the contentment we are seeking. The recognition of awareness as what we are allows us this incredible capacity for letting all appearances just be exactly as they are. They are all seen as perfect expressions of awareness. They are perfect because they are appearing. The fact that anything appears at all is a miracle really. Life is a miracle. You are life, so you are the miracle.

The only choice that matters, when it comes to this message, is the choice to stop looking in the mind for identity and for the answers. This is the most important point in a person's life, when he or she stops emphasizing appearances (mainly thoughts) and begins to look from and as the pure spacious awareness that is prior to appearances. There will be plenty of time to take up philosophical questions about free will once awareness is stably realized. But when we make the experiential recognition of awareness our main focus, rather than mental viewpoints about awareness, we get to the root of the whole dilemma. The root is an identity crisis. Once that is resolved, we can talk about whether there is free will, but most of the time people report that the question is no longer that important. Most of our philosophical questions are rooted in the question, "Who am I?" Once that is resolved, the questioner falls away. We can then play with the questions without seeking identity from them.

What we find is that the treasure we have been seeking in appearances is actually what is looking at the appearances. So if you are interested in the question of choice, make this choice to look. This seeing frees you from the idea that your well-being is in any way tied to what appears or disappears. It seems too simple to be true, but only to the mind. The mind wants to complicate everything. This whole message is simply about dropping our ideas about life long enough to look from the place that is presently awake and looking and confirm that this presence is what we are. That recognition ends the questions and the seeking. Then, we see that every appearance—good or bad—is not separate from what we are. So the question of whether we have choice ultimately doesn't matter in this seeing. We see that choice and no choice are both thoughts that come and go within awareness. They don't move awareness. They don't make awareness shine more brightly. Awareness is already here, shining brightly, like the sun. We've just been focusing on the rays (the appearances) so much that we continuously miss it.

# CHAPTER EIGHT:

## Core Story

Let's return to the discussion of the triangle of the simulated self. Earlier we said that this triangle consists of three bundles of thoughts (i.e., the past, present, and future bundles). These thoughts are often accompanied by emotions. For example, when we think a thought that is threatening from the future bundle, fear is experienced in conjunction with the thought. These bundles constitute the *structure* of the simulated self.

The structure of the simulated self is similar to the structure of a building. To speak of a building's structure is to say that the building has a floor, walls, and a ceiling. Every building has the same structure. To speak of the building's structure is to say nothing of the content of the building. The content of a building varies from one building to another. Your house has a couch, a bed, family photos on the wall, and other personal effects. Your place of work may have completely different content including a desk, machinery, or file cabinets. Similarly, a church has different content than both your house and your place of work.

The structure of the simulated self is the same for everyone. Every separate self is a time-bound, thought-based story created and maintained through identification with appearances (i.e., with thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, and experiences). Everything seems to be happening to a "me" in this story. The story is supported by a physical contraction in the body (i.e., the "self-contraction"). The time-bound, thought-based aspect of the self is the triangle of the simulated self that we discussed earlier. It is made up of the three bundles mentioned above. But saying that it is made up of the three bundles says nothing about the content of that thought-based story.

In this Chapter, we are discussing *content* rather than structure. The actual content of the false self is different for everyone. Here, our goal is not to rearrange the content, find better content, get rid of the content, tell a better story, or psychoanalyze the story. Our intention is merely to illuminate the actual content of the core story. In this illumination, it may be possible to see the particular appearances that make up the "core story" of who you think you are. In recognizing these appearances, the invitation is always the same:

*Recognize present awareness and, without moving to manipulate appearances, see that all appearances are inseparable from awareness.*

This recognition is all that is needed. It solves the identity crisis fully and finally. We come to know that we are not stories. We are not thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, or experiences. These appearances are temporary movements of the awareness that is our real identity. And yet we do not wage war against these stories, including our own story or anyone else's.

A simple working definition of core story is "a one word or one sentence phrase that best sums up the actual content of the simulated self." The core story is a highly personalized conceptual loop that appears to persist throughout one's life. The loop continues so long as there is an energetic clinging to specific appearances (thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, experiences, etc) that constantly reinforce the story. This persistent reinforcement maintains the illusion of the time-bound, thought-based separate self. Recognizing present awareness as the clear, empty, cognizing space within which these appearances come and go resolves this identity crisis. It is then realized that a misperception was occurring. We thought we were time-bound stories. Instead, our real identity is the timeless space in which those stories were appearing. We see that there is no path to what we are. We already are what we are. This recognition is all that is needed.

### **Identifying the Core Story**

Every person has an individualized core story. There may be many facets of the story, many details, embellishments, and subplots. But there is always at least one core story.

That particular core story is the central lens through which the person views and interprets life.

Let's take Mary, a fictitious character, to illustrate "core story" and how it creates suffering, seeking, and conflict.

Mary is a victim. That is her core story. From the view of Mary's core story of victimhood, life treats her poorly, other people have good lives, she is a victim of past circumstances, and the future seems bleak (more of the same). Each of those thoughts is a focus point that supports her core story. There are specific emotions that arise in conjunction with those thoughts. For example, when she thinks of how awful her past has been, she feels resentment, lack, and loneliness.

Mary's core story is much like a movie being projected from her mind. Her interpretation of life does not feel like a story. It looks and feels very much like reality. To Mary, life actually does treat her poorly, other people have good lives, she is a victim, and the future seems bleak. To tell Mary that she is "pure awareness" does not register with her. She is not looking presently from the perspective of pure, timeless awareness. She is looking from the perspective of a time-bound, thought-based lens

(i.e., core story), the content of which can be summed up in the phrase, “I am a victim.”

Until Mary identifies her particular core story, she is destined to keep interpreting life through its lens. She is destined to stay within the conceptual loop of victimhood. Without her core story, she is no one. So the movie of victimhood that is constantly being projected and the painful feelings that arise in conjunction with that movie provide a familiarity. She is clinging to the pain because it is all she knows. Life without the story, and its corresponding pain, is inconceivable.

The people and circumstances in Mary’s life act as a mirror for Mary. In order to remain a victim, Mary must continue to see others as ‘not victims.’ For example, Mary will view her friends as being more fortunate, more attractive, or more skillful than she is. There must also be perpetrators in Mary’s life in order for her to remain a victim. This is the mirror of dualistic relationship. It is an important tool in recognizing separation. For example, every spiritual person needs others that are deemed “unspiritual.” Every attractive person needs unattractive people. Every know-it-all needs others who don’t know. These are the stories we tell about ourselves. Other people are merely the mirrors that reinforce our core stories.

It can be helpful if Mary writes down the focus points that make up her core story. As she writes down the central viewpoints that make up the story, she is now looking at a piece of paper that holds the details of her own story. She went from looking through the lens of victimhood to looking at a piece of paper that contains the focus points. She sees for the first time that what she took to be a self is really just a set of viewpoints that appear within awareness. That seeing alone allows her to rest as awareness rather than continuing to emphasize the focus points for a sense of self.

“Victim” is only one of many possible core stories. Maybe you will see yourself in one of the core stories in the list below. Maybe your story is not among these. In any event, it can be helpful to identify the exact content of the most central viewpoint that defines you. Here is the list:

Seeker

Finder

Know-it-all

Attractive person

Unattractive person

Caretaker

Fixer  
Victim  
Controller  
Spiritual person  
Unspiritual person  
Enlightened person  
Unenlightened person  
Employee  
Employer  
Mother  
Father  
Son  
Daughter  
Wife  
Husband  
Athlete  
Teacher  
Angry person  
Nice person  
Mean person  
Survivor  
Doctor, secretary, engineer (or other career label)  
Free spirit

Healthy person

Sick person

It is so tempting to cling to, analyze, manipulate, and want to change these stories—to make them better. But moving to manipulate the appearances just reinforces identification with them. Only the story would seek to change the story. Only the story seeks future for completion or a happy ending. Only thought would move to get rid of, improve, or do anything with thought. The invitation in this chapter is not to manipulate the appearances within your core story or to find the reasons why your story came about. It is to simply see the story for what it really is. This seeing takes place only in the present. It is a present seeing, not a delving into past. This is how true insight arises. The story is a self-centered loop that just wants to continue looping. It wants to continue in its dream of separation and time. This continuation happens by manipulating appearances. The invitation in this chapter is similar to shining a flashlight into a dark room in order to see the furniture. We don't want to move the furniture around. We aren't trying to tell a different story. We are illuminating the story—shining the light in the room to see the content. Once the content of your core story is seen, it is seen to be an appearance in what you are. What you are is the pure, naked awareness that sees the core story. This seeing is all that is needed.

**Recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate your core story. See that your core story and all the appearances that make it up are not separate from awareness. Your real identity is awareness.**

## CHAPTER NINE:

# The Mirror of Relationship

*I cannot exist by myself. I exist only in relationship to people, things, and ideas.*

*Relationship is the mirror in which we see ourselves as we are. All life is a movement in relationship . . . . In that relationship which is the mirror in which we can see ourselves, we can discover what we are, our reactions, our prejudices, our fears, depression, anxieties, loneliness, sorrow, pain, grief. We can also discover whether we love or [whether] there is no such thing as love. –Jiddu Krishnamurti*

In Living Realization, we do not say that nothing exists. We say that no thing exists separately. Things exist as separate things only because of their relationship to each other. Relationship is duality. And duality is a product of thought. It comes straight from our language. Language is thought. So when we say “things,” we really mean “thoughts.” What Krishnamurti is ultimately pointing to is the recognition that all relationship is a movement of language, which is the same as saying it is a movement of thought. Test this out for yourself:

*When you look around the room you are in right now, how do you know there are separate things? The only way to know that something appears to exist separately is through thinking. So a table appears to exist as a totally separate “thing” only when the thought of it appears. When you look into the room with bare naked awareness (i.e., without thought), you see the appearance of lines, textures, and colors. For example, the so-called table is one color and the items on the table as well as the floor underneath the table are different colors. But in looking at the room with bare naked, non-conceptual awareness, the thought “chair” does not appear. The thought is a concept. And so there is no way to know the chair as an independently existing “thing” without labeling it a “chair.” “Things” come into existence as separate and apart from each other only through emphasizing concepts. Concepts come straight from our language. So when we look at the room without our language, we look from what we really are in the deepest sense—pure, naked, non-conceptual awareness. Language appears and disappears within awareness. Language is not mirroring or simply reporting a dualistic reality “out there.” It is helping to create it. And once a “thing” appears, we know it as a separate thing only by its relationship to other things. Therefore, a chair is a chair because there are other things that are not chairs, such as a table or the floor.*

Why is this discussion even important? Why not just recognize present awareness as the clear empty space that is looking right now? Why get involved in looking at the realm of appearances? The invitation in this chapter is not to think about how things exist in relationship or to analyze the realm of apparent phenomena. The invitation here is similar to the invitation in the chapter regarding “Core Story” and in all other chapters. **Recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate appearances. See that the appearances are not separate from awareness.** We are discussing the mirror of relationship not to encourage you to manipulate the thoughts that appear, or to psychoanalyze your relationships or other people, but rather to assist in the seeing that the entire realm of duality is an appearance in awareness. Thought appears and disappears in awareness. That is to say, the notion of separate people is a product of thought appearing and disappearing in what we really are—awareness. That present *seeing* is all that is needed. No further analysis is necessary.

This seeing is profound! It reveals that conflict in relationship is a product of emphasizing thoughts rather than recognizing spacious awareness as our real identity. As will be discussed in more detail below, this seeing reveals that much of your thoughts about others have more to do with defining a self as against those others. There is no separate self without an “other.” The two ideas are mutually dependent upon one another. They appear together and get their individual meanings only in relation to each other. As the sense of “self” appears, the sense of “other” appears in conjunction with it. Just as you only know a “chair” as a separately existing thing through the concept “chair” and its relationship to other concepts that are “not chairs” including “table” and “floor,” you can only know a separate self by comparing and contrasting this “self” to an “other.” This creates the false appearance that people exist as totally separate “things.” Conflict appears as we seek to distance, compare, and differentiate ourselves from “others.” This conflict is a direct result of buying into a separation that is illusory (that is a product of thinking).

### **The Play of Opposites**

One of the simplest ways to begin looking at relationship is through the play of opposites in our language. Every word in our language (i.e., every thought) gets its meaning at least in part from what it is not. Every idea has an opposite and gets its meaning by implicit reference to that opposite. “Black” is black not because it is a certain appearance by and of itself. Nothing exists independently. It is black partly because of what it is not—white. Similarly, “up” is up partly because it is not “down.” “Left” is left partly because of its relationship to right. The list is endless. Here is a non-exhaustive list of opposites:

You/me (or self/other)  
Us/them  
Black/white  
Negative/positive  
Good/bad  
Birth/death  
Dark/light  
Cause/effect  
Silence/sound  
Moral/immoral  
War/peace  
Hot/Cold  
Up/down  
Left/right  
Here/there  
Past/future  
High/low  
Mean/nice  
Beautiful/ugly  
Loud/quiet  
Rest/movement  
Acceptance/rejection  
Fast/slow

Another way to talk about the play of opposites within our language is to look at the distinction between presence and absence. A word often points to the presence of something. Its opposite is the absence of that thing. We define something, at least in part, by what it is not. For example:

Controlling/not controlling  
Manipulative/not manipulative  
Greedy/not greedy  
Kind/not kind  
Helpful/not helpful  
Smart/not smart  
Beautiful/not beautiful  
Table/not table  
Moon/not moon  
Home/not home

This presence/absence relationship often shows up in spiritual teachings. It is important to see that even our most cherished spiritual terms are still the product of emphasizing dualistic opposites. It is important to see that even our most cherished spiritual terms are still the product of emphasizing thought and therefore duality.

Presence/absence  
Something/nothing  
Spiritual/unspiritual  
Self/no self  
Choice/no choice  
God/Godlessness  
Practice/no practice  
Path/no path  
Form/formlessness  
Matter/space  
Existence/non-existence  
Being/non-being  
Duality/non-duality  
Time/timelessness  
Awareness/appearances  
Consciousness/content of consciousness

Do you see that a word has no meaning without reference to other words, especially to its opposite? Words find their meaning through relationship. Letters are placed together to make words. Words are placed together to make sentences. Sentences are placed together to make paragraphs and so forth. Although this may seem obvious and somewhat elementary, it is often overlooked in our everyday life. We then buy completely into dualism, not recognizing that it appears only because thought appears. Stated another way, duality isn't real. It isn't "out there" in the world. It's "in here" in the mind. And even that is a play of opposites. Out and in appear together as opposites. This is why awareness is often called "non-dual." Awareness is prior to thought. It is the simple awake non-conceptual presence that is reading these words right now. It is not "of thought" at all. As non-dual awareness is realized, even "out" and "in" are seen to be purely conceptual.

The moment we look to thought for a sense of self or for understanding of any kind, we have entered this world of binary opposites. We have entered into a realm of duality. Therefore, we have entered into relationship.

The tendency in many spiritual and self-help programs is to assume that duality is real—to assume that there are actually two objects (e.g., self and other) that must somehow negotiate with one another. Shortly after that assumption is made, you are given advice on "how to act" in relationship with others. In Living Realization, the invitation is only to recognize your real identity as awareness and to see that the appearances "self" and "other" are appearances of awareness. There is something that sees both the thought "me" and the thought "other." That which sees those thoughts is what you really are. Thoughts don't see, nor do they speak, kiss, laugh, work, hear or

anything else. Because people are “thoughts,” people can’t truly love each other. No two thoughts ever meet. Thoughts don’t meet. Thoughts are never actually in conflict. It just appears that there is conflict as we take ourselves to be thoughts. Thoughts don’t love each other either. What you are is awareness. Awareness is love. Love is not divided or broken. Thoughts merely appear and disappear in awareness. That is all they do. They come and go within the space that we are. Thoughts give rise to the illusion of separation. This is why it is often said that the realization of awareness is the realization of unconditional love.

Let’s be a little more specific about how separation appears, and therefore how conflict arises in relationship. Essentially, each person is a set of ideas. We aren’t speaking just of the “I” thought. In an unconscious or unseen sense, we really believe that we are various dualistic stories and that our sense of self is tied into thought. Here is a non-exhaustive list of those stories we take ourselves to be and the stories we tell about others in our illusion of separation:

I am a good person

She is a bad person

I am a spiritual person

He is an unspiritual person

I am attractive

She is unattractive

I am sad

He is happy

I am right

She is wrong

Religion X is the truth

Religion Y is not the truth

Democrats have it right

Republicans have it wrong

God is real

God is unreal

Science has the answers

Science does not have the answers

America is a great country

America is an awful country

I'm a Muslim

He is a Jew

We are Chinese people

They are Irish people

These are all thoughts. Nothing else. They have no reality “out there.” Separate things and people don't exist except through thinking. Do you see the play of opposites happening in these stories we tell about ourselves and in our opinions about the world? In order to be a good person, there have to be “bad people” out there. In order to be attractive, there have to be unattractive people. In order for you to hold an opinion, there has to be someone else who holds an opposite opinion. For example, in order for my opinion that America is great to have any real meaning, I must be able to define that opinion as against something else out there—namely, the opinion that America is not great. Every position needs an opposite. To be a Muslim, there must be others who are not-Muslims (e.g. there must be Christians). Without an opposite, there is no identity. No separation.

We find individual identities through thoughts. This is self-centered or ego-centric thinking. It's the self v. other paradigm. We also often join groups or define ourselves as part of a larger collective identity such as a race, association, church, nation, philosophy or political party. This is group-centered or ethno-centric thinking. It's the us v. them paradigm. It's still identification with thought. There is nothing wrong with thinking nor is there anything wrong with being a member of a group. Separation and conflict appear when we emphasize these thoughts for our identity rather than recognizing awareness as our real identity. We keep separation alive by making sure there are others who we can define ourselves against, who we can disagree with, and be in conflict and war with. We pick a dualistic word and marginalize its opposite. For example, throughout history Christians have marginalized the “others,” namely non-Christians. Russians have marginalized the

others, namely non-Russians. Whites have marginalized others, namely blacks. The list goes on. Do you see what we are doing with language? We draw conceptual boundary lines. We treat those boundary lines as real, rather than conceptual. All boundary lines are potential battle lines.

From the viewpoint of being a separate self, outwardly judging an “other” is the way in which you separate yourself from the other. If the outward judgment is that people are controlling, this implicitly means that you see yourself as not controlling. The list is endless. If my spouse is wrong, I’m right. If my boss is a jerk, I’m a good guy. If I’m a victim, others are perpetrators. If I’m unfortunate, others appear fortunate. In order to be rich, others have to be poor. In order to be spiritual, there have to be others that are labeled “unspiritual.”

By simply seeing this play of opposites as it appears in awareness, identification relaxes naturally. As identification relaxes, conflict disappears. This is perfect proof that conflict arises only when there is identification with thought. When conflict arises, there is usually an emotional component also. We experience conflict with “others” as thoughts *and emotions* in the body. See this for yourself. Envision someone in your life with whom you are in conflict. Bring up painful scenarios in the past between you and the other person. Now stop thinking about the other person for one moment and feel into the body. What appears as an “other” out there in the world is really experienced very intimately within what we call “mind” and “body.” The only way to know an “other” is through thought and emotion. Now, drop the ideas “body” and “mind” and simply recognize a non-conceptual space within. That space is awareness. It is what you truly are. Within that space, all relationship and conflict play out. In recognizing that you are this space, the thoughts and emotions that give rise to conflict are allowed to be just as they are. The thoughts and emotions are seen as inseparable appearances of awareness. This means that the thoughts and emotions are not happening ultimately to a person. They are happening in a space. And the thoughts and emotions are none other than the space. In other words, there is no way to find a definite boundary line between the appearances within the space and the space itself. That seeing is acceptance. It is seen that there is no one there in conflict with self, other, life, or the world. It is all simply appearing exactly the way it is appearing.

It is important to say that the realm of duality (i.e., the realm of thought) is harmless and beautiful once there is no longer identification with it. In Living Realization, we do not make thought into an enemy. We are not inviting you to not have opinions or knowledge. We are not inviting you to stop thinking. Only another thought would say that anyway. The recognition of awareness in no way excludes thinking. The invitation here is to recognize present awareness as our real identity and see that thoughts have nothing to do with identity. Thoughts are

inseparable appearances of awareness. There is no need to manipulate any appearance. In that seeing, thoughts are not manipulated in any way. All thoughts are allowed to be just as they appear. This is the same as saying that all people are allowed to be because people are thoughts. This seeing is perfect, unconditional, natural acceptance. In no longer seeking identification in thoughts that appear, thoughts have a practical and useful function. They are no longer weapons of conflict. They are tools of communication.

Awareness is what we are. Opinions, ideas, and individual stories are appearances in what we are. This recognition reveals that conflict is illusory. It reveals that what we are, which is non-dual awareness, has never been divided. Our real identity is love. This is what Krishnamurti was pointing to in the quote above. By seeing the ways in which thought gives the appearance of duality, we see that our real nature is undivided awareness, which is the same as saying our real nature is love. Love is what is looking right now before we mistake ourselves for thought. Love has never been broken. And so the universe has never actually been fragmented into parts that need to be reconciled through thinking. Thinking is what creates the illusory duality. We cannot think our way into love. We are love. The word love is being used synonymously with “awareness” here.

**Remember: Recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate any thoughts within the mirror of relationship. See that all thoughts are inseparable appearances of awareness.**

# CHAPTER TEN:

## Shadows

A shadow is an aspect of the separate self story that, for whatever reason, gets repressed and then projected outward as an “other.” The “other” is really a reflection of the separate self. We box and hug shadows. To box a shadow is to repress a negative trait and then experience a strong aversion towards others who possess that trait. To hug a shadow is to repress a positive trait and then experience a strong attraction towards others who possess that trait. We’ll go into more detail below about what shadows are and how to spot and deal with them. But first let’s address common questions that pop up at this point.

If shadows are just appearances, why even talk about them? Why go into detail about them? Why not simply stick with the invitation to recognize present awareness and see that all appearances are not separate from awareness? Hopefully, the answer to that question will reveal itself as you continue reading.

There is both good news and bad news about shadows and shadow work. The good news is that the “shadow,” a term first coined by Carl Jung, is one of the greatest discoveries of Western psychology. Re-owning shadows provides a depth of freedom that has to be experienced to be appreciated. The bad news is that many spiritual teachings with an eastern influence (including Buddhism and non-dual teachings) completely ignore talk of shadows. This is more than just a small oversight. This actually creates spiritual teachers who claim, on one hand, to be free of self and who are, on the other hand, boxing and/or hugging a shadow self. This blind spot then gets passed onto students like a virus.

We’ve all heard stories of the guru who speaks with such clarity and wisdom and yet who constantly finds himself in conflict with loved ones or even isolated from family and friends, who defends his own teaching or lineage and attacks others personally as if his expression is the only correct one, who cannot help but sexually prey on young students, or who is always talking about how everyone else is angry, self-centered, or controlling while not seeing those same qualities in himself. Much of this behavior comes from not recognizing and re-owning shadows.

There is an old Buddhist story of a circle of Buddhist teachers that met every year for a gathering in which they discussed their teachings, students, and their own lives. Each year, like clockwork, they would report to each other that everything was going well, except that many of them were still finding conflict with others. So each year they set out to

meditate more, believing that more time on the meditation mat would release this self/other conflict. But each year they would gather again only to admit that many more hours on the meditation mat yielded no real results in this area. These teachers were ignoring shadows. Because Buddhism (including Zen), Advaita Vedanta, and many other spiritual teachings are eastern-based, this story is more common than might be expected. In the move to see through the separate self in the flash of the present moment, aspects of that self can, ironically, hang around for years. In our rush to proclaim that “all there is, is Oneness,” we solidify separateness by ignoring shadow work.

Shadows are hidden. They are not appearances that come and go obviously and openly within awareness. They are unknown, unseen, repressed aspects of the separate self. If they were open and obvious, they would be seen through the simple recognition of awareness and the noticing of thoughts as they appear and disappear within awareness. As a result, meditation, inquiry, resting as awareness, recognizing non-conceptual presence, centering prayer, direct path teachings, neo- and traditional advaita, vipassana, and a host of other eastern spiritual practices and expressions designed to point to the direct experience of presence *never* reach shadows. They aren't suppose to reach shadows. Eastern teachings deal with the Absolute only, not relative egoic stories. Unfortunately, because they don't deal with shadows, many teachers and students from eastern teachings end up boxing and hugging shadows, having no idea why that is happening.

Shadows are the stories we don't like about ourselves. Yet these stories are still operating within us, whether or not they are seen. Everyone around us sees them. But we don't see them ourselves. They are blind spots. We push those stories onto the other side of the self boundary. We make them into “others.” This is why the shadow is sometimes called “the disowned self.” It looks like someone else's problem, but it is actually still just “me,” a part of my story that has been disowned and projected outward.

It's important to reiterate that, as they reside “out there,” as other people's traits or emotions, no amount of witnessing brings the repression to light. They are falsely seen as belonging to others, when they are really hidden parts of the separate self. These are the parts we despise, the parts that embarrass us, and the parts that we disown for various other reasons. You can scream that there is no self for a million years and miss these blind spots. Many have carried their shadows into “enlightenment.”

John Welwood provides a good definition of the shadow in his book, *Toward a Psychology of Awakening*:

*Focal attention selectively emphasizes certain aspects of the experiential field while ignoring others, thereby casting into the shadows these unattended parts of the field. The shadow is the*

*mirror reversal of what focal attention has emphasized.  
Overemphasizing any part at the expense of the whole sets an  
opposite tendency in motion, as part of a larger equilibrium  
process.*

Maybe now you can see why we use the word “mirror” in Living Realization. Let’s look back at the last Chapter, “The Mirror of Relationship.” In that Chapter, we discussed the Play of Opposites. Here are a few examples from that list that we can use to discuss shadows:

Mean/nice  
Controlling/not controlling  
Greedy/not greedy  
Happy/sad  
Success/failure

Let’s stick with Welwood’s term “focal attention.” As we have discussed in previous chapters, the separate self is a set of dualistic stories such as, “I’m nice,” “I’m a victim,” “My life is incomplete,” “I’m a successful news anchorperson,” or “I’m unhappy.” This is the play of opposites playing itself out in our lives. We focus attention on certain traits, stories, identities, feelings, roles, titles, and other thoughts. We pick one side of a pair of opposites and deny or ignore the other. For example, in order to continue telling yourself that you are a nice person, you have to repress “mean” aspects, thoughts, and behaviors within yourself. You have to overlook them, explain them away, deny them, repress them, and/or ignore them. Just to give a few more examples, in order to be a spiritual person, you have to overlook or disown traits, feelings, and stories that don’t meet the “spiritual” criteria. Those who pride themselves on not being controlling have to overlook the controlling voice within them. Those who see themselves as not greedy must repress the greedy story within.

In focusing attention on one side of a pair of opposites, making that your story, the other side is still there, but now it’s repressed, denied, and disowned. Repression is self-deception, plain and simple. The boundary between opposites is purely conceptual. Opposites are mutually interdependent. One doesn’t exist without the other. You can’t actually split them. To pretend to split them is a lie. One side can be repressed or denied, but it cannot truly be split from the other side. The other side of the opposite often appears as an “other.” Suddenly, you (the “nice person”) start noticing all the mean people in the world: the convenient store clerk with her dismissive, rude attitude; your husband who seems so insensitive all the time; and your boss who can’t seem to say a nice word about anyone.

We aren’t stories. Our real identity does not lie on only one side of a pair of opposites, e.g., “nice” as opposed to “mean.” Although it may be

comforting to place our identity in some dualistic story or trait, our real identity is awareness. Recognizing awareness is not about comfort. It's about seeing what is actually here and what is happening. Awareness is the experiential field from, within, and through which all opposites inseparably appear and disappear. Test this out for yourself right now. No matter what story you tell about yourself, it's an appearance within awareness. If you say, "I'm a controlling person," there is still an awareness prior to that story that sees the story as an appearance within its view. The opposite story, "I'm not a controlling person," is also an appearance within its view. These stories are both equal appearances of awareness.

We find conflict with imagined "others" by choosing one story over the other and owning the chosen side as an identity. At that point, the appearances are not seen as equal. The chosen side is given more attention. As Welwood states, "The shadow is the mirror reversal of what focal attention has emphasized . . . overemphasizing any part at the expense of the whole sets an opposite tendency in motion . . . ." What you see as an "other" with whom you are in conflict is really just your own shadow, following you around everywhere, in every relationship.

### **3-2-1 Shadow Work**

Living Realization endorses and uses the 3-2-1 Shadow Process developed by the Integral Institute. We recommend any Integral writings explaining or assisting in that process. We have changed the process a little to suit the Living Realization sharing. In Living Realization, we break shadow work down into three parts:

- 1) Spotting the shadow
- 2) Dialoguing with the shadow
- 3) Re-owning the shadow

#### *Spotting the Shadow*

In this process, it is important to spot a shadow first. The *biggest* mistake that people make with regard to spotting shadows is endeavoring to mentally analyze their own story in an attempt to spot shadows. Upon hearing of shadows, there is a tendency to sit and think endlessly of the various people and circumstances in your story, looking for ways in which you have been boxing shadows *in the past*. There is no need for that. No need to get busy fixating on your story. That is just more self-centeredness. Simple present awareness allows you to see where conflict arises for you. Just pay attention now. Don't analyze past instances in which you have been in conflict with others.

Shadows show up as present conflict. Whenever you see someone in the present moment with a trait or feeling that *really* bothers you, that's a shadow. The other person is a *hook* for your shadow.

People also make the mistake of labeling all outward judgments of others as shadows. Not every judgment is a shadow. For example, if your neighbor tends to talk a lot, having the thought, "My neighbor talks a lot," is not necessarily a shadow. It may be that your neighbor just talks a lot. You know it's a shadow based *on the degree to which it bothers you*. Hooks are those people or things "out there" that provoke strong mental and emotional reactions within us. If you feel great irritation or even anger when your neighbor starts talking, you can bet that there is a shadow operating. That is what it means to *spot* a shadow.

Upon spotting a shadow, many people involved in awareness-based practices or teachings make a critical mistake at this point. They simply witness the negative thoughts and emotions about the neighbor. But witnessing often solidifies the belief that there is an other. And so the story goes, "I'm noticing my thoughts and feelings about my damn neighbor who talks too much." This just reinforces the self/other boundary line. It looks like it's your neighbor's problem. Witnessing just strengthens that misperception. No amount of noticing what is happening within awareness reveals what is actually happening when it comes to shadows. Within awareness, shadows always appear as "others." They are not seen for what they really are—disowned aspects of your personal story. Don't witness. Dialogue with and re-own the shadow.

### *Dialoguing with the Shadow*

The next step is to dialogue with the other person or trait. It may sound funny or feel a little weird at first to dialogue with the "other." But find out what really bothers you about that trait or person. *Don't dialogue with the person physically in your presence*. Dialogue mentally. Vocalize it. Here is an example:

*To John, controlling people are really irritating. He finds himself arguing in his head with these others who boss people around. He would love each one of them to just shut up and leave everyone else alone. In coming into contact with the 3-2-1 process, John begins spotting the shadows when they appear. So he notices that he has a very strong mental and emotional reaction to his controlling boss one day. John does not just notice his thoughts and emotions. He steps aside, out of the presence of his boss, pretends that his boss is still in the room, and says, "I don't like you at all. You are arrogant and bossy and controlling! You always think you know what is best for everyone else and it really gets under my skin!"*

Without dialoguing with the shadow, it will appear again for John either in his boss or some other person. Shadows reappear over and over in our lives. They are conditioned responses, like loops that just repeat endlessly. In dialoguing with the shadow, John now sees specifically what bothers him about his boss. He has identified the trait—control. He has named it. He has listed reasons for his aversion towards it. He is no longer downplaying it, repressing it, or denying how he really feels. For the first time, the loop is interrupted.

### Re-owning the Shadow

Once you have dialogued with the shadow, it can be re-owned. What does it mean to re-own the shadow? It means to stop pretending that there is a self and an other. Specifically, it means to look at your own story, what is happening in your thoughts, and see that the very trait that you are reacting to in the other person is a trait operating within your own story. It means to actually re-own the trait. It means saying, “I am controlling.” “I am greedy.” “I am whatever story I’m reacting against.” It means to actually list the ways in which you have exhibited the very trait you are attacking in the others. Feel how that feels, to own what you have been denying. See where you are or have been controlling or greedy. By re-owning it, the self-deception ends. The trait is no longer being placed on the other side of the self boundary—out there in the imagined “other.”

Once the shadow is re-owned, and seen to be a part of your own story, awareness—your real identity—can now see that both self and other are thoughts. You are no longer placing your identity in a dualistic trait and boxing its opposite. Self and other, and the dualistic traits that kept that division in place, are now seen as equal appearances of awareness. As long as you are boxing shadows, appearances are not seen as equal. Separation seems real.

In the example above, John re-owns the shadow by looking within his thought-based story and seeing that the very thought that controlling people ought not to be controlling is in fact a controlling thought. If John looks a little more, he will probably find that he has all sorts of thoughts about wanting others to be different. That is control. He thinks that he knows what is best for everyone else. Sounds a lot like the trait John was fighting in his boss, doesn’t it? That is not a coincidence. John was shadow boxing.

The reason for re-owning the shadow should be obvious as we look back at a statement from the chapter called “Core Story:”

The invitation in this chapter is similar to shining a flashlight into a dark room in order to see the furniture. We don’t want to move the furniture around. We aren’t trying to tell a different story. We are illuminating the story—shining the light in the room to see the

content. Once the content of your core story is seen, it is seen to be an appearance in what you are. What you are is the pure, naked awareness that sees the core story.

As long as we are boxing shadows, the light of awareness cannot see the core story. Core stories stay in place partly through shadow boxing (as well as shadow-hugging, which we will discuss below). Dualistic content within awareness boxes itself. It's all based on an identity crisis. We don't know who or what we are. For example, good people box bad people. Unintelligent people box intelligent people. Spiritual people box unspiritual people. The list is endless. In John's example above, the point is not that John should tell a different story. It's not that he should start being controlling. This is just about seeing that all opposites are equal appearances of our real identity as awareness.

Shadows are like pieces of furniture that are too dark to be seen as we shine the flashlight around the room. Recognizing present awareness is simply not enough. In re-owning shadows, the light hits them finally. They are seen. In being seen as appearances of awareness, our real identity as awareness is recognized. We stop placing our identity in dualistic, one-sided stories. Shadows are seen as appearances within awareness rather than the lens through which we box and hug others.

To summarize the 3-2-1 process, we spot the shadow, dialogue with it, and then re-own it. You can do the 3-2-1 process with any trait that you react strongly to in someone else.

### **Shadow-Hugging**

You can also do the 3-2-1 process on shadow-hugging. Just as we can repress or disown negative aspects of our personal stories, we can also repress or disown positive aspects. Shadow-hugging happens as we disown positive traits or attributes and then project them outward as "others." We then feel a strong attraction to those others. A classic case is the spiritual seeker who disowns the love, peace, and wisdom inherent in her true Self (i.e., awareness) and instead projects that onto a teacher. The teacher then seems larger than life, "enlightened." Another example is sexual or romantic obsession. We idealize others in various ways, not realizing that these others are really just repressed and projected aspects of our own story. These positive aspects are too powerful, too beautiful, too loving to own. It becomes easier, so we think, to project them onto others.

Victims stay victims by constantly idealizing (shadow-hugging) others who seem more fortunate or who seem to possess great qualities that are lacking within the victim identity. In doing shadow work and re-owning these projected positive traits, it is impossible for a victim to remain a victim. The separate self, no matter how it manifests, is seen to be made of empty mental images. In shadow work, both the good and

the bad (and all other opposites) come fully into view as equal appearances of awareness. There is no more idealizing. No more shadow-hugging.

Other examples of shadow-hugging include obsessing on another's intelligence, personality, success, or wealth. Envy and jealousy are classic projections. We find ourselves fixated on other people who seem to have everything we would like to have within ourselves. The realization of awareness as our real identity resolves this desire to project. Good and bad, attractive and unattractive, nice and mean, spiritual and unspiritual, and all other opposites are seen to be equal appearances of awareness. The "other" you are hugging is seen to be none other than what you are. Awareness. In other words, there is no self and no other. These traits may still appear. In other words, some may appear more intelligent or more attractive. It just won't bother you as much. It won't be *personal*.

### **Shadows and Emotions**

Shadows don't appear just as traits. Do you ever find yourself saying, "Why is this other person so damn angry!?" Do angry people bother you? We've been conditioned to believe that anger is bad. Our spiritual and religious teachings often reinforce this conditioning. We've been taught to suppress anger or "witness" it away. Yet anger is a natural expression of awareness. All movements within awareness are natural, inseparable appearances of awareness. To deny or repress any of it is to deny this fundamental and obvious fact of our existence. This is not an invitation to go out and hurt people in some attempt to "express" your "natural anger." The message here is that anger appears and disappears spontaneously, inseparably, seamlessly and dynamically within awareness. We don't choose it. It just appears. To deny what naturally appears is repression. It presupposes the existence of a person to whom anger is happening, one who must do something with it, get rid of it, or repress it. In our direct experience, we see that there is no person. "Person" is just a thought appearing within awareness. Anger arises directly within pure, naked awareness. The invitation in Living Realization, as always, is to see all appearances as not separate from awareness.

If you find yourself reacting strongly to other people who seem angry, it just means that anger has been repressed within you. Instead of "I'm angry," anger gets pushed onto the other side of the self boundary. Suddenly, it's the "other" who is angry. "He is angry. I'm not!" "There is anger appearing but it's not my anger!"

In doing the 3-2-1 process, instead of projecting it onto an other, the anger is no longer seen to be someone else's anger. To re-own it means to say, "I'm angry" and *really mean it!* In seeing that this anger is "mine," it is then seen to be no one's anger actually. Just as there is no

other who is angry, there is no self that is angry. There is only anger appearing within impersonal awareness. The anger is inseparable from awareness. There is no person between anger and awareness who must mitigate or do anything with the anger. There is no middle man. No self. There is only anger. In that seeing, anger is no longer the enemy. It is nothing that you need to repress and project outward as an “other.” It is felt fully, whenever it appears. No self or other. Just anger. It is no coincidence that anger tends to appear less when it is seen to appear to no one.

The 3-2-1 process can be applied to any emotion, not just anger. Do sad people bother you? Do happy people really get on your nerves? Find out where your hook is. Dialogue with the shadow and re-own it. All emotions are equal appearances of awareness. They don't belong to anyone. Life isn't personal! To re-own shadows simply means to recognize our non-dual nature and to stop feeding illusory separation and conflict. Non-duality is love.

### **Shadows and Beliefs/Positions**

Do you react strongly to positions or views that differ from your own? It is difficult to see that we are often boxing our own doubt when we find strong disagreement in the realm of religion, politics, science, morality, culture, spirituality, and other worldviews. Beliefs and positions are not ultimately true. They are thought-based. There is no such thing as an absolutely true thought (including that thought). Thought is relative and dualistic. When we look to thought for ultimate truth, we often don't see the hidden, repressed doubt that underlies our own positions and beliefs. But the doubt is there. It comes screaming to the surface when we attack others' viewpoints.

All viewpoints are equal viewpoints of the undivided awareness that is our real identity. We attack those viewpoints that we have repressed within ourselves. In order to convince ourselves that we are right about any subject, we have to repress all internal arguments against that position. We have to repress our own doubt. This repression is based on the split between mentally knowing and not knowing—another pair of opposites. Attention is focused on what we think we know or would like to know as truth. We are looking for mental certainty. We repress that aspect of ourselves that doesn't know. But opposites never actually get split. The opposite arguments are still within us. They appear as others “out there” who are wrong. We then find ourselves in conflict with the others. We box them, not realizing that we are fighting our own doubt, so to speak. We maintain a false split between self and other this way. In the recognition that our real identity is awareness, this kind of boxing is seen to be like space fighting space. It's unnecessary and based on an illusion of separation.

Through the 3-2-1 process, we see that all views, beliefs, positions, opinions, traits, emotions, and stories are inseparable appearances of one, undivided awareness. The certainty we've been seeking is not found in mental positions. Awareness is our real identity. This recognition provides an unshakable knowing, a certainty. The certainty of awareness as our real identity never has to be defended because it is not found within the dualistic mind. It's not a mental position.

### **External Is Internal**

This is another area where shadows pop up. We often don't see that, when others confront us and we get defensive, the others are simply presenting an unseen, repressed aspect of our personal story.

External pressure from others is internal drive. We will call that the *pressure shadow*. External criticism from others is really internal self-criticism. We will call that *criticism shadow*. In this discussion, the line between external and internal should be seen as a product of dualistic thought, of once again choosing one side and denying its opposite. Let's go into more detail about the pressure shadow and the criticism shadow.

#### *The Pressure Shadow*

It may not seem obvious at first, but all external pressure is internal drive. Let's illustrate this with an example:

*For the last several years, John has been meaning to paint his house. In the last year, painting the house fell off of John's priority list. Other things became more important, like work and his hobbies. His drive to paint the house never actually left. It just became overlooked, repressed. It stopped appearing as a story or a drive within awareness. One day, John's wife says, "I thought you were going to paint the house! It looks awful! Are you ever going to do that?" John gets automatically defensive. "Stop nagging me," he replies.*

John doesn't see this as a shadow. To John, it's his wife's problem. She is nagging again. "If she would only stop nagging, everything would be ok." He doesn't realize that his defensiveness carries great wisdom. **The external pressure he feels from his wife is really internal drive.** The external pressure from his wife is revealing or bringing back into his awareness his own internal drive to paint the house. His drive to paint the house fell away. It became repressed. Other things became important. John's wife is just reminding John of his own drive to paint the house. But because John doesn't see it for what it is—internal drive—he mistakenly feels it only as external pressure. It's experienced

as an “other.” So instead of “I have a drive to paint the house,” it’s interpreted as “My wife is pressuring me again.” This is how the external/internal boundary in relationships continues to be solidified. This is how the illusion of separation (and therefore conflict) continues, through not seeing what is happening in these situations.

Here is the kicker: **all external pressure is internal drive.** There aren’t any exceptions. We know that statement is accurate by examining something obvious in our own experience. We never get upset when others pressure us to do things which we have no internal desire to do. For example, imagine if John’s wife had said, “I thought you were going to paint the neighbor’s house! It looks awful! Are you ever going to do that?” You see . . . John never had a drive to paint the neighbor’s house. Chances are the neighbor hasn’t asked John to do that. There is no internal drive within John to paint his neighbor’s house. And so no defensiveness appears when his wife asks him about painting the neighbor’s house. He doesn’t experience her request as pressure because there is no internal drive.

In spotting, dialoguing with, and re-owning the pressure shadow, all external pressure is seen to be internal drive.

### *The Criticism Shadow*

Similarly, all external criticism is internal self-criticism. If someone calls you fat and you get defensive, that appears as external criticism. Similarly, if someone calls you greedy and you get defensive, that appears as external criticism. It could be any trait: materialistic, self-centered, arrogant, or unintelligent. Defensiveness always carries great wisdom. Your defensiveness is revealing that you are carrying a self-critical story around. You have a story that you are fat. You have a story that you are greedy. This is why you are defensive. If there were no identification with the thought, “I am greedy,” then someone calling you greedy would provoke no defensive reaction in you. Next time someone criticizes you, thank them for revealing your self-critical story. Spot the shadow. Dialogue with it to see exactly how it makes you feel when you hear the external criticism. Then see it for what it really is—internal self-criticism. Re-own it.

In re-owning the criticism shadow, there is no one there to get hurt. There is just a seeing of the story, “I am greedy” and whatever feelings come with that story. Both “greedy” and “not greedy,” “fat” and “skinny,” and “intelligent” and “unintelligent” are seen to be equal appearances of your real identity—unchanging, unmoving, timeless, non-dual awareness.

**The key invitation in this chapter:**

- 1) Spot the shadow**
- 2) Dialogue with the shadow**
- 3) Re-own the shadow**

**Once the shadow is re-owned, recognize present awareness. See that both your personal story and its shadow are appearances of awareness. Don't move to manipulate either appearance. See that both appearances are inseparable from awareness.**

# Chapter 11: Non-Separation

Let's look again at the basic invitation in Living Realization:

*Recognize present awareness. Don't move to manipulate appearances. See that all appearances are not separate from awareness.*

We focused on the first two parts of the invitation in previous chapters. For example, the chapter "Recognizing Present Awareness" points directly to what awareness is and how it is often first recognized to be prior to (or the source of) appearances including thoughts, emotions, sensations, states and experiences. In the chapters on appearances, we often discussed the pointer, "Don't move to manipulate appearances." We invited you not to move to manipulate appearances, i.e., witness away, neutralize, overcome, escape, analyze, change, or get rid of appearances. Instead, the invitation is always to allow all appearances to be as they are (except in shadow work).

In this chapter, our focus will be on the last part of the invitation, which is to "see that all appearances are not separate from awareness." Before we go into detail with regard to pointing to inseparability, let's discuss what inseparability or non-duality is not. Living Realization uses the words "inseparability" and "non-separation" interchangeably. These words are referring to what has traditionally been called "non-duality." The following section deals with some of the traps we can encounter in recognizing the non-dual nature of reality.

## **What Inseparability Is Not**

### ***Inseparability Is Not About Having A Oneness Experience***

Reality is "non-dual." This means that, although life appears dualistically, there really are "not two." Life is not made up of independently existing things or experiences. Life is undivided, inseparable. This inseparability is often misunderstood. It is not a mystical experience. To reduce non-duality to a single, isolated, separate experience is actually duality.

Although experiences can happen where a person feels a moment of overwhelming non-separation as all thoughts fall away, non-duality or inseparability is not about having an experience. Intense mystical experiences are certainly no guarantee of an ongoing recognition of inseparability. Many people do not report an intense experience of

Oneness. Instead, for them, the recognition of inseparability is much more subtle and sometimes even gradual. This is an important point because these experiences are often overemphasized, where the mind continues to reference back to the memory of the experience instead of recognizing present awareness as his real identity. Or in the case where a person has not had a Oneness experience, the tendency may be to seek such an experience in the future, mistaking the experience with non-duality.

Present awareness is the space in which memories of past insights and thoughts of future goals appear and disappear inseparably. Continuously referencing a past experience is perfect fuel for the simulated self. This self is always looking to the past for a sense of identity. Continuously emphasizing past experiences of any kind, including Oneness experiences, is perfect ego food. It exaggerates memories (i.e., thoughts) of a prior occurrence rather than the simple recognition of present awareness, which is where real freedom, love, peace, and compassion lie. If you have been exaggerating prior experiences, simply notice that those experiences have now been reduced only to memories, which are thoughts, and those thoughts are appearing inseparably within present awareness right now. Similarly if you have never had a Oneness experience and you are looking for such an experience in the future, see that your future experience is only a mental image, a thought, appearing in present awareness right now. That seeing goes a long way in no longer fueling the separate self that lives in a story of time.

Emphasizing past or future experiences can create an addict-like mentality. Just as the addict seeks to recreate past highs or to find the next “future” high or the “ultimate high,” the seeker seeks experiences. Treating non-duality like an experience reduces it to a thing which the self believes it has or doesn’t have. The separate self then goes looking for more of its drug, feeling separate from whatever it is seeking. This is a misperception of what non-duality is all about. It is a present realization of inseparability, not an experience that you have had or that you are going to have.

As stated in the chapter on experiences, Oneness experiences can be enjoyed. Great insight can be revealed in those experiences. Yet, like all experiences, Oneness experiences come and go within awareness. It is freeing to see that all experiences are equal appearances of awareness. We see that our freedom is not conditioned or wrapped up in any single experience. Awareness, which is ever present, permeates every experience. In the recognition of ever present awareness, our freedom is always available regardless of whether we are experiencing Oneness or simply driving to work.

## ***Inseparability Is Not Formlessness Only***

It can be helpful to see awareness much like pure, formless, no-boundary space. Awareness is like the pure space of the present moment. Within this space all appearances (i.e., forms) come and go. The space remains stable and unchanging. The appearances, however, come and go. We often use this kind of pointing in Living Realization. However, don't take the words too literally. They are only pointing. Reality is "not two." Therefore, there really is no division between awareness and the appearances within awareness, between formlessness and form, between space and things, between consciousness and its content.

Many report incredible freedom through the recognition of formless awareness. They see through the sense of separation inherent in lodging identity in appearances (i.e., identifying with thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences). By noticing that each appearance that makes up the simulated separate self merely comes and goes within formless awareness, it becomes clear that our identity cannot be found in these fleeting appearances. This leaves us with the recognition that our real identity is like formless awareness. It is transparent and empty.

However, a common trap is coming to believe in a new dividing line, a new sense of separation between awareness, on the one hand, and appearances on the other hand. This can result in a subtle belief system in which one begins denying appearances. Only the separate self or personal will would have an agenda to deny or vilify anything, including appearances.

Because of the real freedom recognized in present awareness, there can become this subtle desire to escape the world, to view life as something that passes by, totally separate and apart from the awareness that sees it pass by. This can result in a sense of detachment or even nihilism on the extreme end.

This can also be taken to an arrogant place, as the ego settles into a new sense of separation. Its new home is still an idea. It is the idea that awareness is our identity. When we make awareness into an idea only, the dualistic mind is in charge again. Because thought only operates in dualism, it creates a line between awareness and appearances. Appearances are considered separate, other things "out there" to be avoided, denied, or pushed away. This is often not seen. It is a subtle, hidden belief system that one mistakes for non-duality. If appearances are inseparable from awareness, then to deny or vilify appearances would be to deny or vilify awareness itself. Denying appearances leaves out the fullness of life in all its diversity in favor of a state in which one prefers the experience of not thinking and not feeling anything. That is denial. After years of personal seeking or suffering, the tendency to want to escape the world is quite natural. It's also a trap. Non-duality is not about denying the world or escaping from it.

Awareness is not an idea. It is the pure, actual space of the present moment in which the entire world of appearances comes and goes. As it is recognized that awareness itself is not a thing or an idea, and that it is like actual no-boundary, empty, pure space, it is seen that space has no agenda to deny or push any appearance away. Everything is an inseparable appearance of this space. There is no way to separate awareness from what appears within awareness. Therefore, it is only the thought-based simulated self (i.e., “personal will”) that believes it can or should push things away or create dividing lines between me v. you, us v. them, and awareness vs. appearances.

This separateness between awareness and appearances can create a strong shadow as the mind associates formlessness as its identity, thereby shadow-boxing anyone and anything that represents form, appearance, story, or intellect. Rather than simply seeing the empty nature of all concepts, we begin denying of concepts. We turn away from stories including the stories of our friends and family members and other relationships and the millions of other stories that make up our world including philosophy, science, religion, politics, culture, art and others. The world of separate things is really a world of concepts. In denying concepts, we deny the world. The old non-dual saying that “the world is illusory” is not about denying anything. “Illusory” doesn’t mean bad. It means that what we take to be an independently existing world (including separately existing things) is actually an inseparable appearance of awareness itself.

Non-separation is love. To see oneself as merely empty awareness separate and apart from the world of things, stories, art, culture, science, friends, and family is detachment and separation, not love. As the great Indian sage Nisargadatta Maharaj once said, “Wisdom is knowing I am nothing, love is knowing I am everything, and between the two my life moves.” Living Realization arose from this desire to close this illusory split, to welcome not only the recognition of the nothingness of awareness but also the inseparable everything-ness of the world. Living Realization is the recognition of both emptiness and form and the fact that we can never pull these two things apart because they are fundamentally inseparable. They are “not two.”

### ***Inseparability Is Not Homogeneity***

When we hear of non-duality or inseparability, the mind often conjures up an image of some special mystical state in which the world turns into one homogenized gunk. Inseparability is not a situation in which diverse elements like tables, atoms, space, bananas, thoughts, buildings, emotions, and lamps seem to blend into one homogenized, uniform mixture in which textures, lines, and colors are no longer differentiated. Although conceptual boundary lines are seen through in non-dual realization, surfaces, textures, lines, colors, and other elements

of differentiation remain. It is the conceptual overlay that is placed over reality that is seen through as not real.

### ***Inseparability Is Not a State of Human Perfection***

There is a common, false view that those who realize non-separation automatically become perfect or near perfect human beings. Human perfection is a concept that is unattainable. The recognition of inseparability does not make a person special or perfect. It reveals that the lines between separate things are conceptual only.

It is accurate to say that seeing through separation reveals a natural compassion, love, wisdom, freedom and peace. But these attributes cannot be owned by a separate person. They are not stories you add to the story of self to feel special in relation to others. They are not for or of the ego at all.

These attributes naturally appear within non-dual awareness as separation is seen through. Yet it isn't about perfection, which is a concept the ego (i.e., simulated self) uses to continue chasing a future state where all problems are gone and no self-centered thoughts arise. That's a fairy tale. If anything, non-separation reveals humility, which is the absence of a person claiming egoic specialness or perfection.

### **What Inseparability Is**

It is difficult, if not impossible, to state affirmatively what inseparability or non-duality really is because language is our main mode of communication, yet language is based in dualism. Instead of using affirmative terms, let's investigate our present experience and see whether inseparability is the nature of our experience.

### ***Are There Separate Objects?***

The basic assumption is that there are real objects that exist "out there," separate and apart from each other and separate and apart from our awareness of those objects. Let's examine this more closely. The questions below involve a chair. But you can do this exercise with any object or person. Just substitute the word "chair" with "table," "flower," "building," "my friend Tammy," "America," "earth," "universe" or any other concept.

1. When the thought "chair" appears, is it pointing to something "out there" that exists separately? (don't think about this question. Rely only on non-conceptual awareness and just look)

2. When the thought “chair” is dropped, or is not appearing, and awareness is looking without any labels, can you know for certain that there is a *separately existing* object “out there” called chair?

What we take to be separately existing objects are thoughts appearing within awareness. These objects aren't separate objects existing “out there” at all. When you look at a chair without the thought “chair” in your mind, there is no way to know what you are looking at or that a chair exists totally separate and apart from the space around the chair or other apparent objects in the room like “table.”

Thought is the predominant mechanism that provides a sense of separation between “things.” When we look more closely, however, we see that there are no separate things. There are only thoughts. And when no thought is appearing, there is no way to isolate anything in awareness as a separately existing thing. So things are essentially thoughts. Even when the thought “chair” appears, we see that it never appears outside awareness. We see that it is a transparent image within transparent awareness. Therefore, it appears inseparably within awareness—as awareness itself. Awareness and thought are “not two.” This goes a long way in recognizing inseparability.

An obvious question can pop up at this point: “What about touching and visualizing the chair (and other senses), aren't those senses revealing a separate object out there even when I'm not thinking the thought “chair?” Let's look!

### ***Isolating the Senses***

Let's take each sense separately and look at whether the sense, by itself, is revealing a separate object. It is important to actually investigate yourself, rather than merely reading the words written here.

#### *Touch*

Touch the chair without the thought “chair” in your mind. Don't rely on any other senses, only touch itself. Close your eyes and just touch the chair. What does touch, by itself, reveal? It reveals only hardness. Without thought, there is no way to even recognize that these are “your” fingers touching this “other separate thing” called chair. There is only the sensation of hardness. And when you touch the chair without the thought, “hardness,” there is no way to even describe the sensation at all. It is just ISness itself, without division between the subject doing the touching and the object being touched. So nothing about the sense of touch, alone, reveals a separate object called “chair.” There is only touching itself. It takes awareness for the sensation of

touching to be experienced. Therefore, touching never happens outside of awareness. Touching is inseparable from awareness. It is awareness itself.

### *Sight*

Now open your eyes and take your fingers off the chair. Just look at the chair without the thoughts “chair” and “hardness” in your mind. Just experience the chair visually only. Look with non-conceptual awareness. When you look without the thought “chair” and without touching it, there is no way to know that there is a separate object there.

You may find yourself still wanting to describe what you see conceptually. You might say, “But I see colors and lines and textures that indicate a separate object.” Fair enough. But those are all concepts. Look without those concepts. What is seen when you aren’t looking at the chair with the concepts “color,” “lines,” and “textures,” appearing? All that you see is seamlessness itself. There are no gaps or seams in your present experience. Just one seamlessness recognizing itself everywhere. There is no way to know that there is a separate subject, you, recognizing a separate object “out there” called “chair.” To know that you would need concepts. Nothing about the sense of sight, alone, reveals a separate object called “chair.” It takes awareness for visual seeing to occur. Therefore, visual seeing never happens outside of awareness. Seeing is inseparable from awareness. It is awareness itself.

### *Hearing*

Now close your eyes again. Knock three times on the chair, keeping your eyes closed. You are now isolating the sense of hearing. There is no visualizing of a chair. There is no touching of the chair to feel “hardness.” There is only hearing of a knocking sound. When you listen to that sound without the thought “chair” appearing, nothing tells you that it is a chair. There might be a tendency of mind to call it something. You might experience the thought, “Well, I know it is wood because that sounds like wood.” But wood is a concept. Listen to the knocking without concepts. Nothing about the sense of hearing, alone, reveals a separate object called “chair.” It takes awareness for hearing to be experienced. Therefore, hearing never appears outside awareness. Hearing is inseparable from awareness. It is awareness itself.

We’ve done this exercise with the three senses of touching, seeing, and hearing. But you can isolate the other senses of tasting and smelling and find the same result, which is that tasting and smelling are inseparable from awareness. It is probably not a good idea to taste or smell a chair. Try the experiment with food.

The point of this exercise is that no sense, by itself, reveals a separate object. And, in fact, all the senses taken together do not reveal a separate object either. They only reveal direct and immediate non-conceptual sensing itself. Life sensing itself, without the conceptual boundaries imposed by thought. It is only the additional layer of conceptualization that gives the appearance that what is being sensed is a separate object, separate from the awareness that sees the object and separate from other objects. So “objects” are not objects at all. They are appearances within awareness that require sensory experience plus thought. Yet thought itself never appears outside of awareness. Therefore, thought is inseparable from awareness. It is awareness itself.

This is a profound insight. We see that what we took to be an entire world out there full of independently existing things is really a set of appearances that never appear outside of awareness. Awareness and appearances are inseparable. Awareness is the world. The world is awareness. This is emptiness and fullness together. This is non-separation, which is love itself. In this seeing, it is impossible to see spiritual awakening or awareness as being about escaping the world or divisions of any kind.

One more issue may pop up for you with regard to this notion that awareness is the world and the world is awareness. The thought may appear, “But there is a universe out there beyond this world we call earth,” or “There is a country called China that exists out there beyond my present experience.” Notice that those are only thoughts. You never experience anything existing independently called “universe” or “China.” You only experience those thoughts. And those thoughts never appear outside awareness. So “China” and “universe” are only thoughts appearing within present awareness.

Even if you flew to the place we call “China,” you could do the same experiment with the senses that we just did. You would find that nothing exists separate and apart from the awareness that experiences it. You could feel the streets of China for hardness. You could look at the buildings and landmarks in China. You could taste the food and smell the flowers there. But nothing about those sensory experiences, alone or together, would tell you that you are in a separate place called China. It is only the thought “China” that provides the sense that you are in a separate place called China. And the thought “China” never appears outside awareness. The experience of being in China is not an experience separate and apart from awareness. It is awareness itself.

It’s all awareness, including the universe that you think you perceive as something that exists out there independently. Everything that makes up what you believe to be a separate universe out there (including air, wind, clouds, planets, space, sun, and moon) is an inseparable appearance of awareness. The universe, like everything else, is a combination of sensory experiences plus thoughts, none of which are

possible without awareness. Subject and object have no separate existence.

### ***The Body***

The body deserves its own discussion because of the stubborn and persistent belief that awareness is contained within the body or that the body is an object separate from other bodies and objects.

Let's use the sensory investigation above, applying it to the body. Close your eyes so that you cannot rely on visually seeing the body. With eyes closed, you see no body. All that is left when eyes are closed are sensations like heat, discomfort, aliveness, and tingling happening in formless spacious awareness. There may also be an image or thought appearing as you close your eyes. This image may create the sense of an outline of the body. Let both the thought "body" and any mental image of a body come to rest naturally and effortlessly. Now there are only sensations left. Again, we might feel heat, discomfort, aliveness, tingling, or some other sensation. But nothing about these inner sensations, taken alone, tells us that there is a separate object there called a "body." There are just sensations themselves.

These sensations never appear outside awareness. How could they? How would you know they were happening without awareness? They are inseparable appearances within awareness. For example, how can you experience tingling in your arm without the space within which that tingling occurs? That space is awareness itself. It is recognizing itself in and as the tingling. This is true of all sensations. Awareness and sensations are inseparable.

The line between the tingling and awareness is conceptual only. For example, let even the thought "arm" and the thought "tingling" come to rest. Don't even emphasize the thought "sensation." Let that thought come to rest.

Without these concepts appearing, there is no way to describe the experience as an arm or a body tingling. There is no way to say that something is happening in the body or that there is a body. There is no way to say that there is a sensation happening in awareness. It takes concepts to say that. It is just awareness experiencing itself in and as the tingling, so to speak. Now drop the word "awareness" while your eyes are closed. There is no way to say anything about the experiencing. It just is.

After this investigation, open your eyes. When you look at the body without the thought "body," you cannot know what you see. You cannot know that what you see belongs to you—that it is your body. You cannot know even that there is something separate here called a body, separate from other things around the body including space, table, and floor. Visual appearance alone, without thought, provides nothing but seeing itself. It does not provide an object. Stated another way, when

you look with your eyes open with non-conceptual awareness, life is one seamless interplay. There are no rigid boundary lines between body and not-body. Everything seems to bleed seamlessly into everything else. This is to say that there are no independent things. It is only the conceptual overlay that we call “thought” that divides this seamless experience into table v. chair, awareness v. body, sensation v. awareness, my body v. your body, this room v. outside the room, America v. China, and so on and so forth. Awareness is the true body.

### ***Inseparability in the Subtle Realms***

In the section above, we examined our belief in a separate gross, physical world of objects. With regard to the five kinds of appearances in Living Realization (i.e., thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, and experiences), the section above was directed mainly at sensations and experiences. Now let’s look at the more subtle realms including thoughts and emotions (although states are not mentioned below, the same investigation applies to them).

#### *Thoughts*

The thing to remember here is that this investigation can be done with any thought (including even pointers to awareness). And we encourage you to see that every thought is the same. It is a transparent, temporary image that is inseparable from the awareness within which it appears.

Let’s use the thought “chair” since we used it in the experiment above. We have already seen that the word is not pointing to a separate object that exists “out there” waiting for us to discover. The thought is creating the sense that there IS a separate object. If this is not clear, you might want to revisit the discussion above called “Isolating the Senses.”

Once we have seen that it is not pointing to a separate object, all that is left is the thought “chair” itself. Notice that, before the thought appears, there is only awareness. The notion of a chair is nowhere in awareness. It is completely absent. Then, all of a sudden, the thought “chair” appears. It appears out of nowhere, out of awareness itself. It appears seamlessly within awareness. By “seamlessly,” we mean that you cannot find the line that divides awareness from the thought “chair” appearing within awareness. This reveals the inseparability of awareness and thought.

In stopping for one moment and simply looking at a thought, you see it is transparent. What is looking at the concept “chair” is non-conceptual awareness itself. Pure seeing. When you look at a thought, it tends to disappear back into awareness. When a thought disappears, it is gone completely, leaving no trace. Even if you have a sense that you

are looking directly at the thought while it is appearing, notice that there is no way to say that the thought exists as something separate from the awareness that sees it.

Let's use a metaphor to talk about the inseparability of awareness and thoughts that appear in awareness. Suppose you just finished taking a shower. You turn the water off and notice a cloud of steam in the air. You see that the cloud of steam is absolutely inseparable from the space in which it appears. There is no way to pull the steam apart from the space in which it appears.

The same is true for thoughts. A thought is like a cloud of steam. It appears inseparably within the space of awareness. Thoughts can never be pulled apart from awareness. In fact, we can't do anything with thoughts other than notice that they come and go and notice that awareness is the space in which they come and go.

Do you see why we suffer and seek? There is an underlying belief that we can do something with thoughts. Yet the notion that we can do something with thought (manage it, make it more positive, neutralize it, or get rid of it) is just another thought. That is all. The notion of believing that we can manipulate a thought comes from separation itself. It comes from the notion that there is a separate person inside that can split thought apart from awareness and treat it as a separate thing to do something with.

In recognizing present awareness, and not moving to manipulate a thought when it appears, we see that the thought is inseparable from awareness. It is then allowed to be just as it is. We see that we cannot pull a thought apart from awareness because the two are inseparable. In this seeing, thoughts are allowed to be just as they are. Yet they are no longer emphasized or manipulated. They are allowed to be just as they are. And because the world of separate things and people is really just a bunch of thoughts, when the thoughts are allowed to be just as they are, the world of people and things is allowed to be just as it is. This is perfect acceptance.

But let's don't leave it there. In pointing in this way, we continuously emphasize the concept "thought." What happens when you look at thought without the idea that it is a "thought?" You see, emphasizing the concept "thoughts" makes it appear that there really is a dividing line between awareness and thought. But that dividing line, as with all dividing lines, is conceptual only.

Although it may be helpful at an earlier stage of the investigation to rest as non-conceptual awareness and to see that thoughts come and go within that unchanging, non-conceptual awareness, there is a tendency to end up in another split. This is the notion that thoughts exist separately from awareness. From this split, if we aren't careful, we begin denying and vilifying thought, as stated above in the section "Inseparability Is Not Formlessness Only." We shadow box anyone and anything that represents thought, intellect, stories, philosophies, science,

religion, theories and worldviews. That is denial, not awakening. Awareness has never been divided.

When we stop emphasizing the idea that there are thoughts that are happening separately from awareness, we then see it's all the energy of awareness. Thoughts are none other than awareness. These mental images can never and will never appear outside of awareness. They are inseparable from awareness. They are awareness itself. In that seeing, thoughts are allowed to be just as they are. Just as the space never has an agenda to be rid of a cloud of steam that appears within it, awareness has no agenda to be rid of thought. The point of Living Realization is to no longer place identity in thought. It is not to be rid of thought.

### *Emotions*

The exact same investigation can be done with regard to emotions. As an emotion arises, it is important not to label it. By labeling it, we make it into a separate thing. If we place the label "anger" on it, we tend to treat it as something separate and apart from the awareness within which the "anger" appears. Even if we call it an "emotion," we have placed a label on the energy. Once the label is emphasized, thought tends to believe that the dividing line between the subject experiencing the emotion and the emotion is real. But as with all divisions, the line is conceptual only. In believing that emotion has a separate existence from awareness, we usually get into the business of trying to manipulate the emotion—trying to witness it away, neutralize it, make it feel better, escape it, rationalize it, or get rid of it. This is just more seeking. We are looking for a future, pain-free existence. That is not awakening. It is denial. The way of freedom is not to escape or neutralize an emotion. It is to see that it has no independent existence. We go through the emotion, not around it, so to speak. We suffer openly and fully, being completely vulnerable to the entire experience of emotions appearing and disappearing inseparably within awareness.

Emotions are not things that exist separately from awareness. As an emotion appears, recognize awareness as the space from which it appears. The emotion is the energy of awareness itself. There is no actual dividing line between awareness and the emotion. The emotion may be uncomfortable, unbearable even. But there is still no dividing line.

The emotion bleeds seamlessly out of awareness. It never appears outside of awareness. In other words, without awareness, there can be no emotion experienced. And when there is no movement to manipulate an emotion, it is allowed to be just as it is. Just as the space in the shower metaphor never has an agenda to be rid of the cloud of steam appearing within and as it, awareness—as the actual cognizing space—has no agenda to be rid of emotion. Emotions are none other than awareness. The two are inseparable. You cannot pull steam apart from

the space in which it appears. Similarly, you cannot pull emotions apart from the awareness in which they appear. Seeing this is helpful to keep from trying to manipulate emotions. When we are no longer moving to manipulate emotions in any way, and when we are seeing that emotions are the energy of awareness itself, we are facing emotions directly for the first time, instead of trying to escape them or make them feel better. This has a natural, transformative effect. Emotions are seen to come and go inseparably within awareness. They are no longer seen as big, bad monsters. They are seen to be awareness itself.

## **Summary**

We invite you not to simply scan over what is being said in this chapter. If you really look to where the words are pointing instead of trying to grasp what is being said only with the intellect, inseparability or non-duality is seen to be the nature of your present experience.

We have looked at objects, experiences, sensations, thoughts and emotions. We have seen that nothing exists separate from awareness. There are no separately existing objects. There are only appearances inseparable from awareness. Stated another way, it's all awareness. In other words, it is all love. Non-separation is love. In every moment, love is experiencing itself. This is what Living Realization is all about.

Maybe now it is easier to see why we stick with the basic invitation in Living Realization, which is this:

***Recognize present awareness. Don't move to manipulate appearances. See that all appearances are not separate from awareness.***

## **Question and Answer**

*If nothing exists independently, how can we talk about anything? I seem to enjoy being in the world, apparently doing things, and enjoying life.*

We talk about life the way you just did, by using language in a conventional sense. The recognition of awareness does not destroy language. It doesn't destroy thoughts. Thought may or may not quiet in the recognition of awareness. But awareness has no agenda to get rid of words or thoughts. Only a thought would seek to be rid of thought.

Awareness is like the pure space in which all thoughts appear and disappear. In knowing yourself as that space, you begin to see that every thought is inseparable from that space. Thoughts cannot destroy that space. They cannot bring you closer to what you are--awareness. And they cannot pull you away from what you are--awareness. Thoughts are

just appearing within the present awareness that is looking right here and now. That awareness is changeless. It doesn't come and go. Only thoughts come and go and seem to change.

In a conventional sense, life, relationships, thinking and talking go on just as they always have. We enjoy the company of each other. We enjoy our families and our lives. We help each other, discuss politics, and do whatever we have always done. The notion of "me," "you," "politics" and "world" are thoughts, yes. But the recognition of awareness does not make you believe that thought is bad. "Thought is bad" is just another thought coming and going in awareness. That is freedom.

This whole message of Living Realization is about recognizing inseparability, not destroying language or communication. This knowing provides a sense of peace, love, joy, and well-being that is unconditional. It is not based on any appearance yet it permeates every appearance. It is every appearance. This well-being is not based on whether we are speaking or not speaking, feeling or not feeling, thinking or not thinking.

Just like space, awareness is ever present. It certainly doesn't preclude using words or talking. Those who think that the recognition of awareness precludes using language are confusing viewpoints about awareness with awareness itself. When you cling only to a viewpoint about awareness, you make it into an idea. Then you try to fit all other ideas into that idea or make sure all ideas are in agreement with the main idea you have about awareness. This is born from the frustration of not seeing where words like "awareness" are pointing.

*This is a question about physical reality. I did your experiment of touching the chair while removing concepts of chair and finger, and all that was left was a non-specific sensation of hardness. And when the concept of "hardness" is removed there is just something indescribable, but is there actually something happening at what could be called a physical level? It seems to me that any concept of an actual physical world necessarily involves separation, and if there is no separation then there could not be an actual physical world. Any input on this issue?*

The Living Realization text does not state final, ultimate conclusions like, "There is a physical reality," or "There is no physical reality." These are fine as mental viewpoints that can appear and disappear. But they are limiting when held as bedrock truths. Thought may land on what may seem like a final truth (usually one side of a pair of opposites). But Living Realization is much freer than that. Seeing through separation and opposites is the key to this freedom.

It is good that you are not assuming a split between awareness and something "out there" such as a physically separate reality. When we

start with the premise that there is no separation, we can then look to where separation seems to appear and then address that.

There seems to be a question about separation in this statement of yours: *"And when the concept of 'hardness' is removed there is just something indescribable, but is there actually something happening at what could be called a physical level?"*

When the concept of hardness is removed, all that is left is the "raw feel" or sensation without a description. Nothing about that raw feel is communicating any conceptual information at all. The non-conceptual, raw feel (of the table) is not saying to you, "I'm a separate physical reality" or even something more subtle like "I'm indescribable." Those are concepts.

Close your eyes and touch the table. Notice that, when it seems like there is a separate physical reality, there are concepts appearing. The concept is a very subtle mental image of a hand, belonging to you (a separate body/mind) that is touching (or meeting) something else—something that you have conceptualized as an indescribable but separate physical reality.

Let the image of these two things that seem to be "meeting" each other gently disappear while your eyes are closed. Let even the concept "sensation" disappear. Now there is only this "raw feel" without a description. Where is the separation? How far is this raw feel from awareness? Let even the words "raw feel" come to rest. The question about distance doesn't make sense does it? When we aren't entertaining concepts, there are no physically separate objects.

When there are no physically separate objects, there is no sense of distance (near or far). Distance only arises when there is a sense of separation. Notice that as soon as it seems like the sensation or raw feel is "out there" separate from you, concepts are appearing again (the mental image of a body or hand). Let those thoughts come gently to rest again. When there are no concepts arising, there are no separate objects. Does it make sense to then postulate something in here that is separate from something out there, called a physical reality? The whole thing breaks down. Separation is conceptual.

The entire universe from the sun to the dust in the air to the sound of your mother's voice to your own body can be accounted for completely through thoughts and sensations. And how far are thoughts and sensations from awareness? The question doesn't make sense. These are inseparable appearances within awareness. There are "not two." Even your thought, "Is there a physical reality?" is an inseparable appearance within awareness. Life and all our questions about life are inseparable from awareness.

Now open your eyes and stop touching the table. Now we are isolating the visual sense. The visual sense, when there are no concepts arising, is not telling you that there is a table there. For there to be a notion of a separate object called table, the thought "table" would have to

appear. When looking without thought, there is only the color brown. But the color is not saying, "I'm a table," nor is it saying, "I'm brown," nor is it saying, "I'm an indescribable physical reality." These are thoughts. Vision alone gives you only color. Now let the thought "brown" disappear and the thought "color." Where is the physically separate reality?

Now back to the statement about final conclusions. Once it is seen that the physically separate world is really thought plus sensations, separation has been seen through. Therefore you can talk about an apparently separate physical world, knowing that it is just thought and sensation appearing inseparably within what you are—awareness. You can talk about the Sun, the dust in the air, brown tables, your mother's voice, and your body. You are that free! No viewpoint has to be absolutized, not even non-separation. That is the Living Realization.

# CHAPTER TWELVE:

## Time and Space

We take time and space to be real things existing apart from our thoughts, as if they are “out there” whether we are thinking about them or not. Throughout the Living Realization text, we have been pointing from various angles to show that time and space are thoughts. This chapter focuses more directly on these issues.

Before we move into the investigation in this chapter, let’s simplify this issue. If you can recognize right now, experientially (not just intellectually), that time and space are only thoughts, no further seeing is needed. Experiential knowing is no longer believing that you are a separate person living in a world of separate things and people that are moving through time. A sense of ease, lightness, subtle joy, and freedom arise with this seeing. There is no longer a need to seek something in the future. Conflict in relationships relaxes also in experiential seeing. Who are you arguing with if things (e.g., people) are only thoughts? If there is still suffering, seeking, and conflict, take another look at whether there is still a belief in separate things situated in time and space.

Notice that no matter how you divide life up into parts, each of the parts can only be known when a thought appears. For example, there is no way to know that the sun exists as a separate thing unless the thought “sun” is appearing. Warmth on your face doesn’t communicate “sun.” Light doesn’t tell you it’s coming from the “sun.” These are raw sensations. Thought plus sensations make it seem like there are separate objects. The entire universe can be accounted for through thoughts and sensations. And because all thoughts and sensations are inseparable appearances within awareness, the universe is awareness and awareness is the universe. We’ve dealt with the notion of separate objects in previous chapters so we won’t go into much more detail on that issue in this chapter.

Similar to spatially separate things, there is no way to know of a separate point in time, as in yesterday or Wednesday, without those thoughts appearing. If you can see that all points in time are really only thoughts, the belief in time has released itself.

Notice that each time life seems divided up into parts either temporally or spatially, thought is appearing. Those thoughts are appearing inseparably within awareness. Because separate objects in space and time can’t be known without thoughts, and because thoughts are inseparable from awareness, there are no gaps anywhere in life. This is the complete inseparability of life.

If there is still a persistent belief that life contains separate things situated in space and time even when thought is not arising, the investigation in this chapter might help.

In dealing with the issue of space in this chapter, we will deal with the corresponding issues of things existing in space, distance, and location. In dealing with time, we will discuss cause and effect and the notion that things exist in time.

## **Space**

*Strictly speaking, you cannot say that an object exists in space, nor can you say that a thought-form exists in time. Because space is itself an object and time is itself a thought-form. You can never perceive two objects or two thought-forms simultaneously, and unless two or more objects are simultaneously perceived, you can never say one thing exists in another.*

-Sri Atmananda

What is Sri Atmananda saying here about time and space? He says, "Space is itself an object." When he uses the word space, he is not using it in the context that Living Realization uses that word. He means space as a container of other things as in "The earth exists in space" or "The table exists in the space of the room." In using space in this way, it is made into an object, a thought. "Space" as it is used in Living Realization is another word for featureless, no-boundary, non-locatable, objectless awareness or "that which perceives all thoughts but itself is not a thought." Refer to *Chapter One: Recognizing Present Awareness*.

Let's look more closely at this quote from Atmananda.

### **Things Existing In Space (The Table/Space Experiment)**

There is often a belief that things are happening within space. Let's look at this containment issue more closely.

Table appears as a separate thing only because there are other thoughts that divide life into parts that relate back to the table (e.g., chair, floor, you, space). Thought makes "space" into a separate thing. Try to think the thought "table" and hold onto it while simultaneously thinking of the thought "space" as in the space around the table. Do you see how thought can only go back and forth between the thought "space" and the thought "table?" When one thought appears within awareness, the other one disappears. Even if you put them into a sentence, like "The table exists in space," the word table appears within awareness before

the word space appears. They don't appear simultaneously. If you stand back in your room and believe you are seeing a table appearing in a space, thought is appearing. This is what Sri Atmananda means when he says, "You can never perceive two objects or two thought-forms simultaneously, and unless two or more objects are simultaneously perceived, you can never say one thing exists in another." In looking as non-conceptual awareness, there is no way to divide your experience into parts including into things and space. Therefore, how can you say there are things within space? If there are no objects until thoughts arise, you are essentially saying that one thought, table, fits into (exists within) another thought, space.

It is only another thought that comes in later and says, "The table exists in space." But, through the experiment above, we have no direct evidence of two things existing independently except through thought. Therefore, it is impossible to say that one thing exists in another thing, or for that matter beside or outside another thing. When you are not thinking the thought, "The table exists in space," those objects and their relationship to one another are not appearing.

Just to be clear, space cannot exist within the table either. To the extent that you have heard pointers that say that things are made of space, or that space is within each thing, it's just a pointer. It's not meant to be a final truth. Buddha's sutra that says form is emptiness and emptiness is form is important here. To even say that there is form separate from formlessness takes thought. Separation only happens through thinking. "Form is none other than formlessness" is just another way of talking about the Oneness of life and how thought always makes it appear as if there are two (i.e., many).

## **Distance**

Notice how the notion of distance appears. It appears only through thought. You put a sentence together that says, "The chair is sitting next to the table." The "sitting next to" is distance. But it's only a thought. There is nothing between the so-called table or chair saying, "I'm distance!" or "Look at me, I'm three feet of distance."

Spatial measurement is thought. If there are no separate things except in thought, how can there be distance between two separate things? Whenever you see distance, you are thinking. You are conceiving of two separate objects. Notice that when you look with non-conceptual awareness, the notion of separate things does not appear. It doesn't appear because thought is not appearing. Distance is conceptual. Notice when you look out of your eyes as if there is a tree that is X distance from you, you are postulating objects again. In this scenario, you are one of the objects and the tree is the other. And you have imagined a line shooting from your eye to the tree. The line is measuring distance and it really feels like the distance is "out there."

But take one moment and let your thoughts of “you” and “tree” fall away gently. When the thoughts relax, distance relaxes with it. It’s all conceptual.

## **Location**

Location is the same as distance. Think one thought, “Table.” When you are thinking of that one thought, location does not appear. Location only appears when you are entertaining two objects. This means when you are thinking about how two things relate to one another. You have to think “table” and then another thought “chair” in order to conceive of location. Then you say the table is next to the chair. But look from non-conceptual awareness right now. With no concepts appearing, does location appear? Life is pure seamlessness. In the seamlessness there are no separate things. Therefore location is irrelevant in that moment. It’s not appearing. Here is a good question, “If things are only thoughts, how far is one thought from another thought?” “Where is one thought located in relation to another thought?” The question makes no sense because no two thoughts ever appear simultaneously.

## **Time**

### **Cause and Effect**

Cause and effect could be its own chapter. In order for one thing to cause another thing, there have to be two things existing independently “out there.” But as we’ve seen in this and other chapters, separation is a product of thought. For example, take a “hand” and a “chair.” When you are looking without thought, the so-called chair is not communicating conceptual information to you. It is not saying, “Hey, I’m a chair.” “Chair” is a thought. The so-called hand is not communicating, “I’m a separate thing,” or “I’m a hand” or even “I’m your hand.” Look around your room right now in non-conceptual awareness. Nothing is communicating that there are separate objects “out there.” If there are no separate objects except in thought, then there is no way one thing can cause another thing to happen except in thought.

Cause and effect happens only in thought. There is no way to conceive or know cause and effect outside of thought. Test this out. How would you know? How would you prove it? Even if you think you can prove it, how would you express it? It takes thought to know and do all those things. This is not to say that cause and effect don’t exist. It is only to say that they are only known through thought. This changes the notion that cause and effect are “out there” governing our lives as some intelligence independent of thought. And because thought is inseparable from awareness, how can we ever say that cause and effect is operating

independent of awareness? Cause and effect is conceptual only.

In Living Realization, we have investigated whether there are separate objects situated in time and space. We have seen that these objects are experienced only as thoughts and sensations. Without the thoughts and sensations, the objects don't appear. We have seen that these thoughts and sensations are inseparable from awareness. They are awareness itself. One would have to believe in separate objects in order to believe that one object can cause another object.

### **Do Things Exist In Time?**

We've also dealt with the seeing that time is thought in previous chapters. Let's take one more look. There is an habitual tendency to assume that the self or some other object is a real entity that lives in time and space. We make this assumption with all objects. Therefore, the investigation below can be done with any object. But it's more fun to do it with "you." To determine whether you exist as a separate object in space, do the table/chair/space experiment above but insert "you" instead.

How do you know you exist in some larger context called time? First, you have to have a thought. As Sri Atmananda says, "Time is itself a thought-form." Test this out. Can you know that there is time without the thought, "Time" appearing within awareness? Maybe it appears a different way. Maybe time appears as, "The year 2010" or "the past." But each of those is a thought.

Let's stick with the basic thought, "Time." Can you know that there is a separate you without the thought, "I" or "me" appearing? Stated more plainly, you may have assumed that time is this larger thing or context and you are a smaller thing existing within it. But if "time" is only a thought and "you" are only a thought, does any of that make sense? You exist within the thought "2010?" Does that make any sense? Is the thought "Time" really bigger than the thought "Me" or "I." Can you know that one thought is bigger than another? Are thoughts big and small? Do thoughts fit into one another? Where is the evidence for that? Wouldn't the evidence come from thought? The notion of things existing in time is a product of thought.

There may be a tendency to squabble with those previous statements by saying, "I exist in time." This sentence seems to place one thing, "I" inside another thing, "Time." But drop that sentence for one second. Look around the room. Listen to the universe. What is telling you that you exist in time? Are the birds and trees telling you this? Is the sky telling you that you exist in time? You have no evidence, outside of thought, that you exist in time.

These are the stories that thought tells. Notice that each thought (space, object, distance, location, time, and cause and effect) is simply an appearance within what you are—awareness. The entire universe, as

you know, no matter how you divide or measure it, is inseparable from the awareness that conceives it.

**Recognize present awareness. Don't move to manipulate appearances. See that all appearances are not separate from awareness.**

## Question and Answer

*This is a question about cause and effect. I was thinking about this the other night and noticing that when I click the button on the remote control, the TV comes on. How am I to understand this coincidence? Is the connection between the remote and the TV something that arises out of the collective mind? And could that collective mind just as easily come up with the idea that when I dip my spoon into my cereal the TV comes on? In other words, there is no actual physical cause and effect, it is only a matter of what "we" have decided to believe. In this Chapter, you say, "This is not to say that cause and effect don't exist." What do you mean by this?*

To exist is to "appear." This is the root meaning of the word. In Living Realization, we aren't landing on solid, final mental viewpoints like, "Things exist," or "Things don't exist," or "There is cause and effect," or "There isn't cause and effect." The Living Realization text is not postulating final truths. We are concerned with freedom and fullness. Seeing through separation is key here.

This freedom and fullness is so radical and all-encompassing that our questions fall away. The questions are based on the notion of separately existing things like remote controls, people, and TVs that seem to act independently and cause one another. When this separation is seen through, the cause and effect questions fall away. They were coming from a belief in separation.

Rest in non-conceptual awareness for one moment. Then pick up the remote control and click the "on" button without any thought happening.

How do you know the remote control turned on the TV? Non-conceptual experiences do not convey conceptual information. Cause and effect is conceptual information. Did the TV say, "Hey, the remote control caused me to turn on?" No. Because the TV is not an object. It's a thought. Where is this cause and effect information coming from? It's a thought too.

In non-conceptual awareness, the question of cause and effect doesn't arise. You aren't trying to label your experience as if there are definitely real and solid objects in the world, acting independently of one

another, causing one another. The existential dilemma of cause and effect doesn't arise because separation doesn't arise.

In order for cause and effect to appear, it has to seem like there are really objects doing things independently of one another in time and space rather than only thoughts and sensations. Yet the entire experience of grabbing the remote control and turning on the TV and saying one caused the other can be accounted for completely through concepts and sensations.

Look for yourself. Touch doesn't convey, "This is a remote control." It conveys hardness and roundness (yet even those are concepts). Vision doesn't convey, "I'm a TV." It conveys color (yet even that is a concept). Hardness, roundness, and color are not lying around in a separate world out there waiting for us to discover. It takes awareness for these to appear.

It is only thought that comes in later, and provides an interpretation to the raw sensations that says, "I'm an object, person, who is grabbing this other object, a remote control, and this is causing this other object, TV, to turn on." The universe is not divided in parts. The parts are a conceptualization. And the story that one part causes another part is conceptualization. If there are no separate parts, how can one part cause another?

These concepts and sensations themselves are intimate, inseparable appearances within awareness. Therefore what you are seeing as objects out there in a play of cause and effect are thoughts and sensations inseparable from what you are—awareness.

Do you have access to the experience of a remote control outside your thoughts and sensations? How about a TV? How about cause and effect? Do you have access to the interpretation, "The remote is causing the TV to turn on?" Do you have access to the interpretation, "The spoon in my cereal is not turning the TV on?" Where are these experiences? Are they out there in some foreign, separate world? Go find out for yourself. Don't just read this and agree or disagree.

In realizing that the entire world of separate things causing one another can be accounted for completely through thoughts and sensations, and that thoughts and sensations are inseparable from awareness, separation is seen through.

We tend to believe, even after seeing that separate objects are really just thoughts and sensations, that there is STILL something REALLY out there, existing independently of awareness. We think that there is a secret intelligence running the universe, making things cause other things, apart from awareness. Whatever that intelligence is, it has no independent existence from awareness. You could, therefore, say it is awareness.

Every time we look for separate things, we just find more concepts and sensations. Once this separation is seen through, the heavy existential questions fall away. Seeking falls away also because it takes a

belief in a separate person who can take action now to cause something later to continue seeking.

In this realization, life looks more like a timeless play, full of joy and wonder. We know no longer even need to absolutize viewpoints like “Things really exist,” or “Things don’t exist,” or “Cause and effect is real,” or “Cause and effect is not real.” We see that, whatever “truth” or “reality” these statements seem to be pointing to, it can all be accounted for through thoughts and sensations.

This inseparability leaves us free to stop believing in being separate selves who have some autonomous control over other selves and objects. We let life unfold as it will. Life unfolding includes even our stories about cause and effect. This is what is meant in Living Realization by the statement, “This is not to say that cause and effect don’t exist.” We go about our lives, in a conventional sense, explaining how we caused this or that caused that, seeing the joyful irony of it.

We tell our stories. To exist is to appear. Our stories appear. So existence seems to appear. Our stories are included yet seen through. This is total freedom and fullness. It’s not about landing solidly on the idea of non-existence v. existence. All opposites are seen through as part of the play of duality. Even awareness and our stories about cause and effect are inseparable. Our stories appear seamlessly within awareness and disappear seamlessly. The world is awareness and awareness is the world. Seamless and inseparable.

