

Enlightenment for Lazy People

Paul Smit

2014

Preface

During the fall of 2009, a man named Paul Smit crossed my path and told me that everything I had believed in was nothing but a facade. That the earth is not flat but round I already knew; that there wasn't a difference between what I saw as myself and the rest of the world was new to me.

Paul and I spoke about non-duality on the radio station; about how this non-dual insight can make anxiety, feelings of guilt and everlasting doubt disappear. We talked about this philosophy for over a hundred hours. This eventually resulted in the writing of a joint book. Henceforth comes this refreshing piece by Paul Smit named *Enlightenment for Lazy People*. A fitting title, of course, as enlightenment is a totally natural occurrence.

As Paul will explain, you actually don't have to do anything to be enlightened. In fact, everything you try to do to attain enlightenment will keep you fixated on the idea that something like a doer actually exists. Paul opened my eyes and changed my life, which is much more relaxed now. Since being lazy is what I excel in, I will stop writing.

Enjoy this unique little book, which, although credited to author Paul Smit, was actually written by that which is also compelling you to read this book. . . consciousness!

Patrick Kicken

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The Search

Being Happy

If you could give people from the 1800's a glimpse of how we live today, they would probably think we are truly happy. We have so much! We have cars with heated seats and cup holders, airplanes with wireless internet connections and video screens, mobile phones that can text, run WhatsApp, and e-mail that can even be used to make calls! We live in houses made of stone, with running hot water, toilets, washing machines and flat-screen televisions with sub woofers and four speakers.

One would think that we are all immensely happy. However, even though we have so much, it never seems to be enough. We live in a consumer's culture where the satisfaction of our direct needs leads to only temporary happiness. There is a constant emptiness that we want to fill. Sometimes we might even succeed by earning respect, getting a promotion, earning money, eating chocolate, or buying a car or new shoes. But every time, if we examine it closely enough, there's that little voice that says, 'It still isn't good enough.'

The Bubble Bath Moment

When you step into a bubble bath, it feels extremely nice. It is the rise in temperature that gives us that good feeling. But after you have been sitting in the bath for a few minutes, you become acclimated to the temperature and it gets boring because the sense have become used to it. The stimulus has worn off, and we start looking for a new one. Because of this surge in stimulus, we continue to look for happiness outside of ourselves, keeping the Rat Race going. Each time, a new thought comes to mind: 'Once I have a career, the ideal relationship, a big house, a perfect holiday... then I will be happy.' It is a definite fact that such external stimuli can make us temporarily happy but the euphoria does not come from the purchase of that new car or

television.

The liberation feeling or euphoria arises because there is a dropping away of our desire. For a moment, all is well and it is good enough. We have then gained inner peace for a while. Regardless of how much money, matter, power, respect, or success we may have, it is never enough; it can only give us a momentary sense of happiness. Even the richest people on the planet continue to hear that same voice, 'It still isn't good enough.'

The Rat Race

After you are born, two people who call themselves your mom and dad, raise you for a period before you start going to school. From that moment onward, you are taught that it is essential to chase your goals and get good results. The Rat Race has begun! Once you finish primary school, you go to secondary school. After that, you most likely study some more. Once you have a diploma, you secure a place in the system where, after hard work, you still have to work your way up. Then, after forty years of hard labour, you finally make it! You have a husband or a wife, two children, a Golden Retriever, a leased car, and if things go well enough, you may even be able to take a vacation twice a year. Nevertheless, despite achieving all of this, you still don't feel any different from before because again, there's that little voice repeating itself, 'It still isn't good enough.'

Spirituality

You think, "There has to be more. There has to be more than just this earthly existence. All these material things are fun, but they don't really make me happy. You know what, I will become spiritual! I will develop myself and explore the spiritual aspects of life!

Incense enters your life and a new world opens up. One person becomes a Reiki master, another vegetarian, while others find peace in meditation. You work on yourself using these methods,

and even though there are moments of happiness, there is still that little voice saying, 'It still isn't good enough.'

There is nothing wrong with chasing material or spiritual goals, but this path will continue to maintain the illusion that you have to do something in order to feel good about yourself or about the circumstances you live in when the 'trying' to feel good is actually what is making you feel bad. Finally, a person catches wind of 'enlightenment!' An idea plants itself into the mind. 'If I can attain enlightenment, I will always feel good!' Who wouldn't want that?

Achieving Enlightenment

If you want to be a good soccer player, you have to train a lot. If you want to be a good guitarist, you have to take lessons, practice diligently, and perform a great deal. In short, many things in life require effort on our part in order to achieve anything. With 'enlightenment,' however, this works differently.

You don't have to 'do' anything to be enlightened!

You don't have to apply a method.

You don't have to learn a technique.

You don't have to meditate.

You don't have to eat like a vegetarian.

You don't have to go to India for it.

You don't have to worship a guru.

You don't have to wear special clothing.

You don't have to take a course in it.

You don't have to go through a rebirth.

You don't have to mind your breathing.

You do not have to change yourself.

You do not have to be spiritual for it.

You do not have to clean your chakras.

You don't even have to read books for it.

Well... except this one, of course, but once you finish it, you can throw it away.

Non-Duality

The Earth is Round

Insight into non-duality is enlightenment for lazy people because you don't have to do anything to achieve it. The only thing that prevents you from being enlightened is the fact that your brain is filled with 'false' presumptions. These limiting ideas make you believe things that most likely are not true. This book takes a look at concepts from a non-dualistic point of view, which may turn your world upside down. It may be similar to the shock that was experienced when it was discovered that the Earth is round. For centuries, it was believed that the Earth had the shape of a flat disk. Whoever wandered too close to the edge of the world would fall off and never return — or so it was believed. When 17th century astronomer Galileo Galilei made it clear that the Earth was round, spins around its axis, and rotates around the sun, people were stunned.

Such perplexity can also occur whilst reading about non-duality. Some may get confused, while others might get angry. Nonetheless, it is also possible that the insight will touch you and offer you liberation and inner peace.

Non-Duality

Non-duality, being synonymous with Advaita means, 'not-two.' It refers to the idea of everything being one and everything being connected to one another. Advaita is an ancient Indian knowledge that dates back to the old Upanishads, 800 years before Christ. The non-dualistic teachings were passed on for centuries from teacher to student. Ramana Maharshi (†1950) and Nisargadatta Maharaj (†1981) are two teachers who had numerous Western students, which accounts for how the philosophy found its way to us.

Non-duality is not a religion. It doesn't pass judgement on right and wrong, it doesn't know rules, methods, or rituals, and is

only a reference to the truth, thus, not being the truth itself. Philosophers who occupied themselves with non-duality were, amongst others; Spinoza, Albert Einstein, William Shakespeare, and Arthur Schopenhauer. Teachings that also include non-duality are Taoism, Zen, Dzogchen, and Sufism.

Watching a Movie

Let's have a look at non-duality by using a simple example. Imagine that you are sitting in a movie theatre. A movie is playing on the screen. While you relax, you see how the scenes succeed each another. Sometimes it is exciting, sometimes you laugh, sometimes you feel romance, and sometimes you feel sorrow. The emotions run through you, but because this happens without resistance, it feels marvellous. Such a movie brings you this inner peace and you may even feel 'enlightened' and free while you watch it. Many movie goers love to pay for a ticket to enjoy a movie for an hour or two. The interesting thing is that it can even feel nice to experience, for example, fear, while watching a horror movie. Furthermore, people tend to find it a good way to express sadness during a movie. 'I cried like a baby,' they say, sometimes even with a smile on their face.

Even though we try to avoid sadness and fear in our daily lives, we can openly enjoy it during a movie! This is because there is no resistance to those emotions.

The Muppets

Imagine, if you will, that the Muppets Waldorf and Statler are sitting on the balcony in that movie theatre, and are continuously commenting on the movie before them.

'Christ, Brad Pitt should have never made that decision in the previous scene!'

'Watch out, Brad!'

‘I knew that was going to happen, man!’

‘Great, now you’re in jail, you fool!’

‘What if this ends badly?’

‘What if he doesn’t manage to escape?’

‘By the way, check out his shirt, it’s way too tight.’

‘Yes exactly, he probably shrunk it in the laundry’

‘You think he has a dryer at home?’

‘You should hang a shirt like that to dry on a line, it works better.’

‘Or, he could have bought a larger size.’

‘He should’ve stayed in Tibet.’

‘Yes, but that girl did run away with his friend.’

‘Why does this always happen to him?’

‘He should have been friendlier in the beginning.’

Due to the Muppets’ drivel, you can no longer enjoy the movie. You may even end up Shouting, ‘Could you please quiet down?! You’re ruining the entire movie!’

Life is a Movie

The simple message of non-duality is that one's life is also a movie. It *is* possible to experience inner peace, exactly like the experience you have while watching a movie. However, we humans have Muppets in our head. These Muppets constantly comment on everything, with the result being that we continue to live with all kinds of worries, frustrations, guilt and tragic scenarios in our heads.

As soon as we realize that life is a movie in which everything goes as it should go, we find peace. Feelings of guilt and frustration concerning events that have happened in your life disappear, along with all anxiety-filled thoughts of what could happen in the future.

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women
merely players. – *William Shakespeare*

Everything Is as it Is

When you are watching a movie, you realise that everything in the movie goes as it is supposed to. Therefore, there is no reason to worry. Every single scene is exactly how it should be. From the non-duality point-of-view, our life is also a movie in which the scenes succeed each other and can not be any different than they are right now. I know, if you are hearing this for the first time, this idea might seem a bit strange. This is because we perceive ourselves as individuals who can choose what we do and what we don't do. Additionally, one's way of life seems as though it should depend on the choices one made in the past. Seems as though. In any case, imagine that everything happens regardless — that you don't have to worry about anything at all — that everything you do, and all the choices you make, also happen by themselves. So then, you've never done anything wrong, and you can leave the feelings of guilt, anxiety, stress, and frustration behind. Does that not sound wonderful?

Living in the Now

You have probably heard the phrase ‘living in the *now*.’ But what exactly does this mean?

When you are sitting in the theatre and enjoying a movie, you are in the ‘*now*.’ Peacefully, you watch what is being played on-screen. You might even think back about what had happened in the last scene and how the movie will end, but all without struggle and without resistance. There is acceptance in what is happening on screen. This is due to the fact that you realize that it is just a movie, and everything in that movie is following the script. But the Muppets do not live in the *now* at all! They are constantly worrying about the past and the future. They are frustrated because the past occurred a certain way, and also because they’re busy bringing up all types of doom scenarios that could unfold in the future. Naturally, all types of disconcerting thoughts may arise. If only it was... If only I had... Why did I do... Suppose if... What if... In the future... But, what about...

It’s Always ‘*Now*’

Plenty of people do not enjoy the present moment, their energy goes to frustration and guilt over past incidences and anxiety in wondering what will or could happen in the future. The one thing that cannot be denied is that it is always ‘*now*.’ Even if you’re reminiscing about old times or thinking about the future, you are still doing that in the ‘*now*.’

The past and the future exist nowhere but in our thoughts! Even the ‘*now*’ can only find a place in our imagination.

There is only this moment! – *Bill Hicks*

Absorbed in Something

Enlightenment is not a mystical or supernatural experience that makes you feel as though you were on LSD for a week. Enlightenment is natural. It is in the moments of inner peace that occur when the Muppets in our heads are quiet. These are moments where we are absorbed in an activity such as being captivated by a book, a good conversation, a movie, making love, or playing a sport. They are moments when you are active and simultaneously experiencing an inner peace. We also experience this when we laugh, dance, or sing. The Muppets in our head, or our worrying mind, is switched off and we are 'in the flow', we are in the '*now*'. We are fully absorbed in an activity and there are no thoughts that give us a feeling of frustration, anxiety or stress.

The Sand Castle

A child can really get into the building of a sand castle. A child can be busy for hours, digging, building towers and figures. Then, everything is washed away, bit by bit, until nothing is left. The child is deeply happy and enjoys every moment. It is free of worrying thoughts. When we as adults, lay on the beach, the Muppets in our heads are constantly chattering away:

'Yesterday the weather was better, if only we went to the beach yesterday.'

'I have to call back that annoying client for work next week. What a nasty man.'

'Oh dear, look at that woman over there, you don't wear a bikini like that!'

'Should I grab some chips later?'

'Better not, I should lose some weight.'

‘But a little pack of chips should be okay...’

‘I just won’t have them with mayonnaise.’

‘Can’t they forbid these dogs over here?’

While the child is enjoying his or her afternoon, our joy gets overshadowed thanks to all kinds of thoughts, anxieties, judgements, irritations, guilt, and our need for control.

Away With the Muppets!

Why is it that we, as adults, have Muppets inside of our head? The worrying happens because we think that we can control our life. We believe that we can choose what we want, what we think, what we feel, and what we do. It is the idea that we have free will that makes us panic and anxious in our lives. What if we make the wrong choices and what if we could have done something differently in the past? In short, the whole idea of a free will comes with a lot of stress, frustration, guilt, and irrational fear.

Do we have free will at all? And how can we get rid of those Muppets inside of our head? Remember, this book is for lazy people and I did say that you wouldn’t have to do anything. Thus, I repeat; you don’t have to do anything to get rid of the stress, frustration, guilt, and anxiety. Furthermore, there is nothing wrong with such emotions. The only thing discussed in this book is one insight — the insight that life is controlling you instead of you controlling life.

Free Will

Just like a movie in the cinema, the movie that we call 'Our Life' also goes exactly as it should. Every scene and every event could therefore, never be any different. It may sound a little unbelievable, because for us humans, it seems like we do have free will. It seems like we can choose what we do and what we think. At this very moment, you could choose to continue the book or stop reading it. Even though it seems like you are making the choice now, the choice is not made by 'you.' The choice originates within you. Researches conducted by neuroscientist's have proven that we do not create thoughts, but that thoughts originate from within. We do not choose what we think!

The most famous to date research, is that of neuroscientist Benjamin Libet. The test subjects were to press a button at a time of his/her choosing. Watching on a monitor, Benjamin Libet could tell that the subjects were going to push the button 200 to 500 milliseconds before they actually did. In short, there is unconscious brain activity first, followed by an action. As the neuroscientists can see the unconscious brain activity, they know when the subject is going to press the button even before the subject is pressing the button. So before becoming aware of pressing the button, the unconscious brain has already made the decision to press it. The latest research shows that one can predict when somebody is going to push the button six to ten seconds in advance. In most cases, one can also anticipate if the subject will press the left or the right button. Thoughts, feelings and actions originate automatically and unconsciously and after that, another part of the brain activates and comes up with a story about the previous activity. We call this the 'default system' of the brain. It is constantly creating the illusion that it is you doing all the actions and also creating stories about why we do the things we do. Our consciousness comes into play very late, and we become aware of a choice, a feeling, or thought once it has already been made by the unconscious brain. Our consciousness is therefore no more than a poorly informed reporter.

A being, endowed with higher insight and more perfect intelligence, watching man and his doings, would smile about man's illusion that he was acting according to his own free will. – *Albert Einstein*

I Do Not Control Myself?

Strange, isn't it, the idea that we do not have free will? At this moment, it seems as though you can choose to do what you want. However, our brain guides us to carry out certain actions, make choices, blink our eyes, get something out of the fridge, and speak.

The idea of free will is probably even stranger than the idea of not having a free will. Think. Do you choose to breathe in and out? Do you choose to let the blood flow through your veins and to make your digestive system work? Do you choose when you are hungry and thirsty and when you have to pee? Do you choose to be ill? Do you choose to be sleepy and do you decide when you fall asleep? Do you choose to heal your wounds and to let your hair grow? It all happens automatically. Do you choose how you feel? If we could do that, everyone would truly be happy! If that were the case, we could also choose to never be moody again, to never feel depressed again, to eat healthy all the time, to exercise every day, to drink less, to sleep more, and to never be judgemental again.

Genetically Programmed

Did you choose your genetic composition? The way you look, how tall you are, what your talents and limitations are, how your voice sounds, and what your character traits are? A large part of this is genetically determined. Did you choose to be born in this country, in this culture, with these parents, in this family and in this neighbourhood? All of these elements have had a big influence on how you currently think, act, and view the world. Besides that, your environment, your education,

your experiences, and your genetic programming make you into what you are today. Moreover, 99.999995% of everything we do is taking place at a subconscious level. You are only 0.000005% aware of what is actually happening. In other words, if there is a thing such as 'a free will' in our brains, it would be minimal, because our behaviour is predominantly determined by elements over which we have no control whatsoever.

Elements such as culture, environment, social status, media, colleagues, your partner, friends and family, your function at work, and mirror neurons also have an influence on how you behave. On top of all of that, the season, the weather, the food we eat, and economic crisis can also affect our behaviour.

Chauffeur of Your Body

It seems like you are your own chauffeur, like your body is a car and you are sitting behind the wheel. However, it is not easy to control the body due to its limitations. Sometimes it falls ill, sometimes it gets tired, and sometimes it gets excited. The body also needs to go to the restroom, needs food, and needs to drink every single day. The body also has a certain appearance to take into account. If the body is too heavy, you might try to lose weight; if you are beautiful, you may go crazy from the stares and attention, and if the body is tiny, you might do your best to steer clear of arguments with larger people.

It isn't easy to drive this thing! And no matter how hard you try to get the vehicle in a certain direction, it hardly ever does what you want it to. It's the same thing as those cars on the tracks in amusement parks; there is a wheel in the car that you can turn, but the car will automatically continue on its already predetermined path.

The idea that you are driving the car is an illusion!

Neuroscience

Neuroscientists have discovered that our declarations and ideas about why we do something are only thoughts that pop up after the action has already occurred, the words have already been spoken, or the choice has already been made. Our brain is playing a trick on us! First, there is unconscious brain activity, then an action, and a split second later, a new thought arises to make up a story about the action that just took place.

In your deepest sleep, self-awareness is turned off, so 'you' are not there to control anything. You sleep for hours while your body functions automatically. It moves, it breathes, digestion continues, and cells replace themselves. This all happens without 'you' steering the wheel and being in control. When you wake up, self-awareness turns back on and instantly, the idea that you are somewhere inside the body steering the wheel is created.

Our conscious, mental projections are only thoughts afterwards. This gives us the illusion of power and control. – *Irvin D. Yalom*

The Sun Orbits the Earth

A lot of people find it hard to accept that everything goes as it should go and that free will is only a figment of our imagination. Our brains trick us and give us the impression of having a free will while we are simply being driven by the brain.

So, what you experience is not as it really is.

A simple comparison here from philosopher Schopenhauer: "Imagine that I ask you, 'Does the sun orbit around the earth?' You get up in the morning, you walk outside, and you see the sunrise. During the day, you see the sun orbiting the earth. Hence, the answer to this question is very clear and simple — the sun orbits the Earth! But if we zoom out and look at the entire universe, it suddenly becomes clear that the reality is

totally different. The sun is not orbiting the Earth at all — rather, the Earth rotates about its axis and orbits the sun. In short, what you see is not always reality. If we look from a different perspective, we realize that reality is actually very different from what we believe it to be.”

Santa Claus Does Not Exist

Every year, a child waits excitedly for Santa Claus to come. The child gets new presents from good old Santa, and hands are filled with candy. The child sees Santa Claus with his own eyes and is fully convinced he really exists. Thus, he assumes that the stories his parents told him are true. The child believes that Santa Claus rides a sled pulled by reindeer to deliver presents at night. Before the child goes to sleep, he spends all his time singing songs for Santa Claus and hoping that he is heard. When the child wakes up early in the morning, he runs downstairs to see what Santa has put in his stocking. After years of believing this story, there comes a time when the parents have to tell their child that Santa Claus doesn't actually exist. Everything the child believed in all those years turned out to be an illusion! The child is now distraught with loads of questions right away. 'Then who bought the presents?' 'Where are the drawings I made for Santa Claus?' 'Who dressed up as Santa Claus?' 'Who filled my stocking?' Confusion all around!

Free Will Does Not Exist

It is understandable that confusion arises when we are told that free will is an illusion. You are thirty, forty, fifty, maybe even sixty years old, and raised with the idea of free will — when suddenly, you are told the opposite. Just like the child who discovers Santa Claus to be an illusion, there are bound to be many questions and reactions to such a revelation. 'If I do not have free will, I could spend my day on the couch doing nothing.' 'If I don't have free will, then I should rob my grandma's purse, eat in a five star restaurant, and leave without paying.'

The answer is simple. *If you had free will, you could choose to do all these things.* Is your head spinning yet? It may be confusing, but you still didn't have to do anything! Well... except for a little reading and thinking. Sorry, I just realized I made you do something. But at least you didn't have to physically get up for it.

Let's move forward.

Taking a look at the question, 'Do I have free will?' we might investigate the brain to find out 'where' this free will comes from. Let us take a look at who that '*me*' is that could have a free will.

Let's just say that your response might be, 'I have free will'.

Who is this '*I*' that has a free will?

Who Are You?

Ramana Maharshi used to ask a simple question to his visitors:
'Who are you?'

I got a visit from Martin recently and I asked him the same question:

Who are you?

I am Martin.

No, I do not ask for your name, I am asking who you are.

I am a director.

No, I do not ask for your job or rank, I'm asking who you are.

I am the owner of a company.

No, I did not ask you what you have; I am asking you who you are.

I am a man.

No, I did not ask your gender, I am asking you who you are.

I am a millionaire!

No, I did not ask you how much money you have; I am asking you who you are.

I am a human being!

Ah, and what part of this 'human being' are you?

What part? Well... this is my body.

You said, 'This is my body.' You did not say, 'I am this body.' Strange, isn't it? You also did not say, 'I am my heart.' You say: 'This is my heart.' You did not say: 'I am my hair,' but, 'This is my hair.' But if this is your body, where is the 'you' that owns the body? If you are the chauffeur of your body, then where are you? Where is the driver?

Uhm... I don't really know.

Let's find out, shall we? If we took off your arms, would you still be Martin?

Yes, of course.

And if we were to remove your legs, leaving only a body with a head, are you still Martin?

Yes.

If we replace organs such as your heart, kidneys, and lungs with artificial organs, would you still be Martin?

Yes.

But then who are you?

Well, I am my senses... I think.

If you are blind and deaf, and you can no longer smell, taste, and feel, are you still Martin?

Yes, I would still be there.

But who or what is this 'me' who is still there? What piece would I have to remove before 'you' do not exist anymore?

My head, I think!

What if you wake up in the morning, you look in the mirror, and you suddenly have my body. Are you me or are you still Martin?

I would still be Martin.

So, are you your body?

No.

Okay then, who or what are you?

I think I am my brain.

So then, you are your brain?

Yes, I think so.

Sometimes there are parts of your brain removed during surgery. So what part of the 1300 grams of your brain are you? Where is your 'me' hidden?

There is probably a piece of my brain where the 'I' is hidden.

What it comes down to, is that the 'I'-thought originates from the brain. These 'I'-thoughts make sure that you experience yourself as an individual. You do not get these thoughts in deep sleep and there is no idea that 'you' are there or that 'you' need to do anything. And even then the functioning of your body just continues!

I don't understand it anymore.

Your concept of 'I', or the idea that you control your body, is a thought. During your deepest sleep, these thoughts do not arise — but when you wake up, self-awareness is turned on and thoughts of being an 'I' resurface. The brain is therefore tricking us constantly!

The Ego

The idea that you are a separate human being is nothing more than a thought. It is the self-awareness in our brains which constantly gives us the impression that we are individuals with free will and that we have the power to pilot the brain.

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us universe — a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. – *Albert Einstein*

The sensation of being an 'I' happens because we have self-awareness. A term often used for this self-awareness is the 'ego.' In Sanskrit we call the ego 'Ahamkara,' literally translated as 'the I-maker'. The ego is the I-maker.

When a thought arises, the ego creates the idea, 'I think.'

When a feeling arises, the ego creates the idea, 'I feel.'

When a choice is made, the ego creates the idea, 'I choose.'

You breathe continuously, so the ego creates the idea, 'I am breathing.'

Blood moves through your veins all day, but the ego thinks, '*my* blood is moving through *my* body.' The ego functions to make sure that we see ourselves as an individual.

The Baby and the Mother Are One

Since the self-awareness of a new-born baby hasn't developed yet, the baby sees himself as one with the mother. The baby experiences the sensation of separation for the first time between the second and the fifth month. It becomes aware of other people but it is not aware of itself yet. Self-awareness starts when the child is around 18 months old. This is the first time that the child can recognise him or herself in the mirror. This is also when long term memory starts to develop. So, for one and a half years, the child functions without self-awareness. When the baby cries and the mother comes, the baby is happy. When the baby cries and the mother does not come, the baby is sad. End of story! After one and a half years, the ego mechanism will start to interfere. When the baby cries and the mother is coming, the baby will be happy. When the baby cries and the mother does not come, the baby will be sad. But then, the thought that it should be different will arise.

The first Muppets in our heads arise and from that moment on, the worrying begins: 'It is my mom's fault,' 'I am not good enough,' 'If only things happened differently,' 'What if this happens again tomorrow?' The child gets the idea that he or she has a choice, a need for control arises as well as the idea that things could have been different. The 'default network' in our brain is the part where all the 'bla bla stories' come from. This part starts to run at full speed from about the age of nine.

Your Self Image

The ego mechanism is constantly creating 'I-thoughts,' which makes us identify ourselves with many things. We identify ourselves with our name, our function, our voice, our preferences, our body, our weight, our successes and failures, our bank account, our thoughts, our feelings, our car, our house, our children, our appearance, and the clothes that we wear. All of these elements form our self-image — which is fine! However, there is a constant need to maintain our self-image. When someone says something bad about you, or criticises you, then your self-image will instantly become unstable. You will immediately become defensive or start lashing back, or look for support and confirmation from others, lest you risk falling into the role of the victim.

You look in the mirror, see your reflection, and think, 'That is me.' When what you see is considered beautiful, you think, 'Look at me, I am very attractive,' and you will compliment yourself — as if 'you' had anything to do with being beautiful. And if you see something that you don't consider beautiful, it can affect your self-esteem and make you look for confirmation from others.

I Am Not Good Enough

Plenty of people live with the idea, 'I am not good enough' thus; we often walk around thinking of strategies to prove to the world, and ourselves, that we are okay. One might become dominant and aggressive with conflict-seeking behaviour in order to prove that one is good enough.

There are also people who think, 'I am not good enough,' and they show pleasing, submissive behaviour with the notion that says, 'If I am good enough for someone else, I will be then be good enough.' These people tend to put themselves second and busy themselves with making everything comfortable for others, hoping to get some sort of confirmation. There is nothing wrong

with that, of course, it just originates from the idea that one is an individual with free will that has to be 'good enough.'

You are always the perfect expression of energy, although your ex-mother-in-law might not agree with that.

Feeling of Unity

We are all, one energy.

That being said, the universe looks as if it is constituted by billions of different life forms. We pretend that diversity exists. Since it is in our nature to yearn for unity, we feel happy when we experience this feeling.

When you are in love, you feel a very strong sense of unity, like the connections you share with certain family members and friends. You can also feel this connection during a concert, or through the unity within a soccer team. As soon as we are connected, there is a synergetic effect that makes us feel happy. Through the feeling of unity, the idea of being an individual dissolves a little. Where there is unity, there is more spontaneity, more creativity, more passion, more inner peace, and more humour.

Need For Control

Because we believe that we have free will, the need to control life naturally emerges. The Muppets in your head are busy all day long, worrying about everything. These Muppets come up with all kinds of doom scenarios and are afraid that things will go wrong; the results will end in feelings of frustration, guilt, blame, anger, irrational fears, and stress. In short, suffering. We try to take our lives into our own hands; we make plans with good intentions, and panic when things veer off-course.

Taking an honest look at let's say, ten years ago, could you have predicted your life to be as it is now? Likewise, how will it be ten years from now? You simply cannot tell. In the morning,

you wake up with all kinds of plans. When you look back at the end of your day, how many plans worked out the way you had planned? Every day is a surprise; you never know what might happen. There are many variables that have an influence on what the day may bring, proving that control is an illusion.

Life is what happens to you, while you are busy making other plans. – *John Lennon*

Getting Rid of the Ego?

Many people have come to the realization that the ego can cause quite a fuss and so they think that they have to get rid of it. Not possible! If you no longer have an ego, you no longer see yourself as an individual. That can be quite tricky. During your deepest sleep, the ego machine, or self-awareness, is switched off. Those are the times when the concept of 'I' is no longer existent. When you wake up, self-awareness also reawakens and generates ideas such as 'I slept well last night!', as if there was an 'I' that could do anything about that while 'you' were sleeping. It is not that you have to get rid of the ego, it is about the insight that you are not your ego. Thanks to the ego, we experience ourselves as individuals who have the free will to make choices, which is fine, but realizing that you *have* an ego, instead of *being* the ego, can be a big relief.

Everything is Consciousness

Non-duality means no-two. Non-duality refers to the idea that everything is one consciousness. If you like, you can also call it; one energy, one unified field, oneness, one God, one Brahman, one Tao.

Consciousness creates the universe in the form of a playground, so it can experience itself in all facets.

The four elements constituting this playground are: matter, plants, animals, and people.

A stone is energy, just like a plant, the difference being that a plant has a metabolism. An animal can move and show emotions, and it also has certain instincts. We, as people, have a greater intellect and a more fully developed sense of self-awareness.

If I were to ask you, 'Who lets water flow?', you would probably look at me strangely and say that water just flows, it just happens. Water is energy that moves. Who or what lets trees and plants grow? It also just happens. It is simply energy at play. What about animals, what makes animals move? An animal follows certain behavioural patterns without actively thinking about it. In the morning, a lion doesn't think about what they are going to eat later in the evening. Do you think that they are wondering if they will feel like having a deer or a zebra? No — all the lion's actions are executed purely by instinct, without thoughts. Does a lion have a choice about what it should do, or does its choice happen because the lion is genetically programmed and conditioned in a certain way? A lion is a more complex form of energy than, for instance, a tree, but just like water and trees, a lion is energy at play.

The whole universe is energy at play, with billions of solar systems, planets, trees, plants, and animals. Then, there are pieces of energy that we call 'human beings.' In the entire universe, we account for a measly 0.00000000000001% of its total energy. In other words, 99.999999999999% of the universe is controlled by

energy... except for human beings? Doesn't that seem a bit odd? We, as people, are also energy at play, and we are driven by this energy. The only difference is that because of the I-thoughts that we have, it seems like we can control ourselves. All the while, the energy that makes the sun shine, the universe expand, and the plants grow is the same energy that makes you read, speak, feel, think, and act.

Life is a Dream

It was written, 800 years before Christ in the Upanishads, that life is a dream.

Over time, it has been scientifically proven that the whole universe is a giant hologram, and that the reality we perceive is created by our minds. This 'reality' is therefore nothing more than figments of our imagination.

Through our senses and thoughts, a certain reality is created that does not actually exist — it only looks real to us. If you accidentally bump your head against the kitchen cabinet, you may punch the cabinet out of anger and rub your head because it hurts, but even that is an illusion because the kitchen cabinet does not exist at all! That cabinet consists of molecules, and molecules are built, in turn, of atoms. An atom has a core around which electrons revolve. The core has a diameter of 1 femtometre, or one billionth of a meter. This core — the nucleus — is by far the largest part of the atom, while electrons are a thousand times smaller. If the nucleus is as large as a marble, then the entire atom would be the size of a football stadium. What we call the 'kitchen cabinet' is therefore empty. It's a bit weird that it hurts to hit your head on it.

Does the Moon Exist?

Even the core of an atom cannot be called matter. Quantum physicists have discovered that the building blocks of such a

core behave in a phenomenal way. In 1927, Werner Heisenberg called this, 'The insecurity principle.' The building blocks can sometimes behave as particles, sometimes as waves, and sometimes as both simultaneously. These subatomic parts are therefore not solid objects, but vibrating energy packets that cannot be understood as loose particles.

Scientific theories have developed into something even more remarkable! Through the study of quantum physics, it has been discovered that an atoms quantum particles take on a solid shape when a spectator is present. The attention of a human will freeze such a particle. The theory proves that if you do not look at something, it does not really exist. Einstein himself has said that he was not sure if the moon actually exists if he doesn't look at it.

Life, or the world, comparatively speaking, is much like a computer game; the world in which you run around as a digital puppet does not really exist, but only appears on the screen if you are currently in that level of the game.

Death

Matter is not only imaginary, but time and space also root from our imagination. Einstein said that space and time aren't circumstances in which we live, but a way in which we perceive things. Time and space, just like our individuality, only exists in our thoughts. Life is a dream; we have just been programmed in such a way to make life look real to us.

This reality is only an illusion, but according to Einstein, it is a very persistent one. As soon as you realize that you are consciousness and that the whole universe is a dream, fear of death will also fade. Because you are immortal, you cannot really die!

What you really are is unity, eternity, infinity, and love. Everything is one. Here on earth, we, as consciousness, pretend that there are individuals who are born and die later. Inside the dream, there are appearances that eventually disappear from the stage.

We are ocean waves that swell and disappear again and again, and the water of which we are made will never disappear.

Energy cannot disappear, it can only change shape.

The All Included Journey

As soon as you realize that everything is one consciousness, and that everything is driven by that one consciousness, life will become easier. You will realize that life is an all-inclusive journey. As a human, you are an actor in a movie in which you follow the script automatically. You always superbly play your role, and every scene occurs exactly as it should. Therefore, you have never done anything wrong in the eyes of the director.

As soon as you realise that everything goes as it should go, the movie will simply continue. You are then no longer bothered by the Muppets complaining about everything and thinking things should be different. The movie may still have setbacks, or things you do not like, but when you see that everything goes as it should go, nothing will be wrong. There will still be emotions, however, it will be like watching a movie, and you will not resist them. Feelings, thoughts, and emotions arise and wane, just like waves of the ocean.

Emotions

There is nothing wrong with having emotions. Experiencing emotions can be pleasant as long as you do not resist them. Some people can actually enjoy crying while watching a movie. In that moment, your emotions will be expressed without resistance, without you trying to rid yourself of them or suppress them. If we experience something humorous, we laugh and express our emotion without resistance. While having fun, we don't think, 'Oh dear, I have been cheerful for an hour already, how long will this last?'. 'How can I get rid of this?' But when we encounter a painful experience, we suddenly make a problem

out of it. When we experience something painful, or if something touches us, the Muppets come up with new thoughts; 'If I cry now, others will probably think I am weak.' 'I have to be strong.' 'I don't want to experience this; I will just deny it's occurring.' When we suppress our emotions, we try to keep all our balls under the water, because of our fear of feeling pain. We don't dare show our vulnerability, fearing it will have a negative effect on our self-esteem and image.

Duality

Every human would like to feel good all the time. Almost nobody waits for setbacks, disease, arguments, traffic jams, flat tires, and computers to crash, but those things do happen. Since the ego urges us to control life, we are always busy avoiding pain and searching for pleasure. It is this rat race that appears to bring us misery. When experiencing setbacks, panic arises and when there is prosperity, greed takes over and the desire for more grows.

The liberation is not in the running away from setbacks or the achieving of prosperity, but in the embracing of both. One cannot exist without the other. Everything has its yin and yang. Ebb and flow, inhaling and exhaling, day and night, success and failure, winning and losing, high and low, grief and pleasure. All of these elements are undeniably connected to each other.

Duality is needed because it is not possible to realize something is hot when we do not understand the concept of cold.

Exciting Adventures

Imagine watching a movie in which problems are non-existent, where everything and everyone succeeds, and there is not a single setback. For instance, you're watching the Gladiator fighting in the Coliseum and the emperor suddenly stands up and announces: 'Sorry, everyone. But we are all one, so let's stop this nonsense. Throw your weapons aside, and we can all go for some coffee. Oh, and sorry that my ego was so inflated that I displayed all types of dominant and crazy behaviour. I apologize.' The Gladiator puts his weapons down and goes home, where he continues his existence as a farmer. And that's it. End of story, end of the movie. If this were to happen, you would likely stand up in the theatre and say, 'Oh my god, what kind of boring movie is this?!' You might even demand a refund. A movie is only exciting thanks to the duality that is depicted within it.

Our lives are exciting, thanks to all events — pain and pleasure included. As soon as we look at life as if it is a movie, we begin to understand that the things we see as ‘not fun’ or ‘annoying’ are just a part of the script. It is the duality that makes our life interesting and exciting.

Two Sides of the Coin

Pain and pleasure, health and illness, good and bad luck and love and hate are all part of the duality in life. We want one side of the coin, to always feel good and happy and no matter how hard we may try. There has never been anyone on this planet that has had the experience of having only purely good and happy times. It’s pointless to try to avoid duality.

Liberation comes when it is realized that duality is beautiful because it is the only way the whole story can happen.

When the yin and yang are embraced, there is inner peace. There is a realization that you accumulate all types of experiences as an actor; sometimes fun, sometimes less fun, sometimes exciting, and sometimes boring. When this insight is present, it is seen that everything is precisely how it is, and how it should be happening at that time; without resistance, without frustration, without dependence, and without irrational fears. There is inner peace and the experience of life can no longer be a burden. It will feel like a weight has been lifted off your shoulders. This is why we use the word ‘enlightenment’.

Zooming In

Plenty of people live 'zoomed-in'. They see themselves as individuals that must control their own life and make the right choices. This idea causes all kinds of thoughts and with them, emotions and ego games, such as:

Frustration about how things went

Worrying about what could happen

Stress, due to various problems

Resistance to situations or emotions

Regrets about past choices

We will do anything to maintain our self-image and get confirmation from others in order to feel good about ourselves. This expresses itself in a number of ways:

Seeking conflict and acting dominant

Being pleasing and submissive

Blaming others

Fear of criticism and the opinions of others

Lying and making up excuses

Arguing

Criticizing others

Protecting only ones self

Giving ones self all the glory

Seeking Fulfilment

When we are 'zoomed-in', our happiness depends on stimuli from the outside world. Only when our desires are fulfilled, or when our self-image is fed, can we experience this temporary happiness. There is a constant seeking for this fulfilment that relies on the reactions or confirmations of others, or the buying of material goods, or the reaching of goals. All the while, this feeling of emptiness remains. We keep looking for fulfilment. Some get it through shopping or acquiring money. Others strive to become successful and others take drugs, smoke, or seek fulfilment on a sexual level. There are also people who fill the void by acquiring power and respect. That is all fine! After some time, however, we may find out that these are only temporary solutions to fill up the vacuum. We feel happy for a moment, but once that feeling of emptiness inevitably rises again, we have to hunt for the next bit of happiness.

If I... then...

If I win the lottery, then I will be happy.

If I get a promotion, then I will be happy.

If I meditate every day, then I will be happy.

If I find the right partner, then I will be happy!

If I stop smoking, then I will be happy.

If I finish my exam, then I will be happy.

If I lose ten pounds, then I will be happy.

If I get a holiday, then I will be happy.

If I complete this project, then I will be happy.

... but is this really true?

Happiness is the absence of the striving for happiness. – *Chuang-Tzu*

Anxiety

Desire is also a fear; more specifically, the fear of not get something. We can divide fear into functional fear and worrying fear.

If a tiger runs into the room, fear makes sure that you will run and protect yourself. That is a genetically programmed functional fear, a survival instinct.

There is also a worrying fear, or the fear of what could happen in the future; the fear of what others think of you, the fear to speak to someone, the fear of rejection, and the fear of failure.

Because our brain cannot distinguish reality from fiction, the body responds to anxious thoughts like it would to real fear. When you think about something horrible that could happen, you feel your body respond immediately. This worrying originates from the idea that we can control the future. Therefore, we can take all possible scenarios into consideration, but having lived on this planet for some time already, you may have noticed that things often happen differently from what you had originally planned.

Crashed Car

Imagine watching a movie. In that movie, a lorry crashes into and totals a car. One big wreck! You look at it, even find it funny, and there are no worrying thoughts about the fact that it should have been different. When the movie is over, you walk out of the theatre and notice that a car, probably also a lorry, ran into your

car. Immediately the worrying begins: ‘Why does this always happen to me?’ ‘Couldn’t the driver have been more careful?’ ‘If only I parked my car further ahead.’ ‘What if my insurance doesn’t cover the damage?’ All these thoughts cause plenty of emotions. You immediately feel angry and frustrated about this incident. Suddenly it seems that you didn’t take a proper look — because it is not your car at all! It is the same brand and colour, but your car is parked ten meters further away. The emotions immediately dissipate, and just like the movie, you can even find it funny.

In short, the worrying mind will kick into gear as soon as we identify ourselves and believe that things could have happened differently.

Criticism

When someone is criticising you, you might take it really personally. People are often inclined to defend themselves, to shift blame, or to launch a counter attack. But the person who is criticising you can’t do anything but express those words. He or she is simply energy at play. If that person was a robot, what would your reaction be? ‘You are lazy,’ says the robot. You will probably laugh, or say, ‘That’s fine, if you say so,’ because you realize that the robot is programmed to say that, and it isn’t ‘someone’ who is saying it. Given the fact that our individuality is imaginary, the same goes for when a colleague criticises you. It is not ‘someone’ who says it; it is just the energy at play speaking those words. You, as receiver, are energy receiving those words.

Without identification, there is no criticism, no attack on your self-esteem, it won’t activate the Muppets in your head, and it won’t activate the emotions within your body.

Zooming Out

When we zoom out and see that life is an all-inclusive journey, there is inner peace and relaxation. The need for control, frustration, and feelings of guilt and anxiety for the future no longer exist.

Zoomed In	Zoomed Out
I am controlling life	Life is controlling me
Fear for the future	The ' <i>now</i> '
Frustration about the past	The ' <i>now</i> '
Need for control	Letting go
Contraction	Inner peace

When we are zoomed in, two problems arise. You want something that is not there, or there is something that you do not want. Both problems arise from the idea that things could be different from the way they are now, but, that is an illusion. Everything is consciousness, and this consciousness is playing a game in which all appearances play their role. In this sense, the human is a uniquely programmed instrument being played by consciousness.

Spectator of Yourself

As soon as identification shifts from you as a separate individual to you as consciousness, a change may occur. Rather than worrying about the previous and next scenes as an actor in your movie, you will become more of a movie spectator. Thusly, you become a spectator of your actions in that movie. You see what actions are made, what choices are made, which words are spoken, and what experiences occur. You realize that it seems as if you are an actor in the movie, when in reality, everything

occurring is consciousness playing a game. Due to the fact that identification with the actor fades, there is no great need to maintain your self-image, to chase for things that make you feel good, or to judge and criticize others. One simply observes the movie, where duality continues to exist. There are scenes where everything fails and there are scenes where all goes well for the actor. When we are zoomed out, this all takes place without worrying that it could have happened differently.

Responsibility

A frequently asked question is, 'If we don't have free will, then what happens to responsibility?' 'Who' could be responsible? Everything is energy in motion, including the bodies that we call 'human.' It is consciousness that does everything; the notion that we, as individuals, do something is only a thought also created by consciousness.

You don't control yourself, and therefore are not responsible for anything. Water can't help but flow to the lowest point, a tree can't help growing, and a tiger can't help hunting deer. Ergo, a human can't help but do and say certain things. A puppet is not responsible for its own movements. Additionally, whether you feel or don't feel responsible for something, is also dictated by consciousness. A thief can't help but steal a car, a policeman can't help but arrest the thief, and the judge can't help but lock up the bad guy. It all occurs automatically. So the feeling of responsibility is also happening automatically, you can not choose if you feel responsible for something or not. It's just happening.

Fatalism

If you perceive life as a movie and realize everything will happen as it should, do you do anything at all, then? Some people expect that you would stop going to work; stop raising your children, or that you would spend all day on the couch. They would expect

you to become very lazy and fatalistic! This thought originates from the ego that makes one believe one has control. 'If I let go of the wheel, everything will go wrong, and I will end up in the gutter!' is a thought that may arise — which is quite logical! For your entire life, you have been conditioned with the idea that you have control. Then, someone suddenly tells you that you aren't the one steering the wheel and that everything just happens.

You don't have free will at all and even your individuality is an illusion. You don't have a choice to sit or not sit on that bench, to go or not go to work, to be lazy or not be lazy, to be impartial or not be impartial. It seems like you make a choice, but you simply automatically do what attracts you the most. In turn, those thoughts originate automatically in our brain.

The idea that we create those thoughts ourselves and make choices is a secondary thought.

Functional Mind

We have a functional mind that makes us act and lets us make choices, again completely automatically. The worrying mind is the part of the brain that will make up a story about what is happening. It equates to a spectator in a stadium commenting on the game. As soon as you lose with a score of 1–0, the functional mind will pick up the ball and go on playing soccer. However, the commentator in the stadium starts to worry: the defence should have been better, what if the match is lost, you are not good enough, you should have trained more, why does this always happen to me? The worrying mind is busy resisting that-which-is. It makes a problem out of everything and only sees problems. As soon as we zoom in, we feel good when we win and bad when we lose. When we zoom out, we just enjoy the match. When we win, we will not instantly take all the credit and brag about how amazing we are. When we lose, we won't feel depressed. But whether zoomed in or out, it does not matter. It is all consciousness at play.

Waking Up From the Dream

The phase of waking up from the dream happens once you realize that life is controlling you instead of you controlling life. It is the transition from zooming in to zooming out. This process of awakening is not always easy and may cause some confusion, pain, and changes. I will describe a few phases that I encountered myself, that I also see taking place with a lot of people around me.

Firstly, there is the confusion phase, where the beliefs you've held your entire life are suddenly turned upside down. All sorts of beliefs you had are slowly breaking down while you keep on repeating, 'yes, but' in your head. Yes, but what about responsibility, reincarnation, karma, and the purpose for living? All of these subjects are put into a new light. There is no responsibility, but everything is action and reaction, or Newton's law, or karma. However, as our individuality is imaginary, it is not a 'someone's' karma. It is just action and reaction happening, and as there are uncountable actions and reactions happening at the same time, we can never really know why things happen. And 'who' reincarnates? There is no individual; there is only energy at play.

You are Already Enlightened

Besides confusion, there is also a phase in which one is motivated to reach enlightenment as quickly as possible. The driving force behind this desire is the ego. It wants to feel good all the time, and enlightenment seems like the ultimate way to reach that goal. In this phase, a lot of books may be read and a lot of meetings may be attended. We actually search for methods to help ourselves. Something along the lines of, 'Tell me what I need to do in order to become enlightened.' The lousy thing about non-duality is that there is no method! It is enlightenment for lazy people, hence not having to do anything at all. Of course, you will still be preoccupied with thousands of things because you are energy at play — you can't help what you are

doing, thinking, or feeling. The moment you think you have to do something in order to become enlightened, for instance, going from A to B, is the moment that the ego is trying to take control. You can't reach enlightenment because you already are enlightened! You already are consciousness! There is no separate 'you' who can go somewhere to become oneness again, because there is only oneness. We are like a drop of water trying to find the ocean. You are the ocean! Separation is an illusion.

Superiority

When the idea that you are in control of your life fades, the 'ego' mechanism may still surface in subtle ways now and then. When non-duality is understood on a rational level, the ego will grab it like a toy to make itself special. It will start to feel superior and say: 'Look at what I know! You are still in the spiritual game, but I already know that I do not exist!' People in this phase often argue about what the best teaching method is, and that the message of non-duality should be explained a certain way. They also argue about what teacher is the best and try to avoid the words '*I*' and '*me*'.

In Love with Non-Duality

There is yet another phase, during which time; you fall in love with non-duality. This occurs when you notice your daily life activities become easier and happen with less worry. This joy and relief causes you to want to share the feeling and bug fellow party goers about the fact that free will does not exist and that our universe is only a deceiving illusion. At this point, people will look at you apathetically; they will offer you another beer, hoping you will shut up. There is no use in talking about non-duality when people are not ready to hear this message.

One Hand on the Wheel

Little by little, you will notice that everything in life happens automatically, and the idea that you do anything is an illusion. Zooming out happens more often and it feels glorious! But then, the ego will chime in and ask, 'How did I manage to zoom out like that?' And BAM! You are back where you started and you contemplate what you have to do to zoom out again. No matter how hard you try to zoom out, the opposite will occur as self-identification and desire return, along with the idea that you can control this process.

The hardest thing for the ego is to trust that life is taking care of you. Everything, including 'you', is just happening. This may be quite scary in the beginning, because the Muppets are still in your head and they continue to make you believe that if you let go of the wheel, everything will go wrong. Thus, you will continue this miraculous process with one hand on the wheel — just to be sure.

Giving Up

Chasing all kinds of things used to be the norm: acquiring that comfortable car, your career, your lover, your beautiful self-image, and the amazing vacations. Then, you realize that while these things can bring you happiness, the feeling is brief. Additionally, if these come and go automatically anyway, why would you continue to chase them? You end up in the apathetic phase, where you no longer see the point of doing things and trying to reach goals. Why would I still chase a career? What benefit does it add? You see people around you running from one place to the next, working, working, working, but you no longer see the point of the rat race. This can be a phase where your conditioning is changing from achieving goals in order to find happiness in the future, to simply living life. This may feel empty for a while, although your passions will come back eventually. There will still be things you like to do, you can still have a goal or have

something you like to accomplish, but without stress, fear and the idea that there is something wrong with this moment.

The Advaita Shuffle

Two realities are happening at the same time, just like the story of the Sun and the Earth. On one hand, there is our perception that the Sun orbits the Earth, while we know that the Earth orbits the Sun. We pretend that what we perceive is true, and that is fine! The Advaita shuffle can be explained with this example. Imagine you are enjoying a glass of red wine with your boyfriend or girlfriend on the beach, and he or she says: 'Beautiful isn't it? This sunset. . .' and you reply: 'Sunset? The sun is not going down at all! The Earth rotates about its axis, you must be confused! To which he or she responds, 'Yes, sorry. I only said that because I am enjoying this sunset.' To which you say, 'Beauty is only a concept; it is a subjective thought. Moreover, there is no 'me' that can find it beautiful, because you are also an illusion.'

Obviously, you can understand that you won't be loved much by the people around you during this phase. In this phase, you are constantly walking around telling people that everything is an illusion.

The Computer Game

You may understand that everything is consciousness and that this consciousness controls everything and everyone. Nevertheless, you still experience that you are an individual with a free will at the same time. It is like playing a computer game. You are fully focused on the virtual world of the game, yet you realize that this world does not really exist. The computer game is a figment of your imagination on a computer screen. If you're constantly thinking, 'It does not exist, it is only a virtual world, it is all an illusion,' it will suck all the fun out of the game. It is the pretending that it is real that makes the game fun. This

is also the case for our lives. You can realize that it is all consciousness, that life is a dream, and that everything goes as it should go. With the Advaita shuffle, however, the game isn't fun since you're constantly telling yourself and others that it is an illusion. Especially when painful moments occur, the ego brings in the 'everything is consciousness concept' as a defence mechanism against the pain, thinking, 'Ah! No, it is only an idea — an illusion — and nobody is doing anything.' But if that happens, then, naturally, that's just what happens.

Am I There Yet?

There are going to be moments of clarity, when life feels like less of a burden, and you suddenly start to wonder, 'Am I there yet?' As you think you are liberated, life steers you into a situation where you instantly zoom in and realize the struggle is back! You think, 'Shit, what went wrong? What did I do wrong?' Of course, you did nothing wrong; all goes as it should. The idea that something went wrong by zooming in is one of the many strange beliefs created in your mind. At a certain point, while zooming in, you become aware of the Muppets, once again in your head. Most people think that the Muppets are their own thoughts, but as soon as you realize that you aren't those Muppets, you will begin to be aware of them. You might think, 'Ah, there they are again.' The difference, however, is that the Muppets will no longer be believed and they will lose their power. In the beginning of the awakening, people often 'flip-flop,' moving from total clarity into chaos and back again. This might happen for a while, but in time, the 'flip-flopping' will become less extreme and occur less often.

Old Pains

From a need to avoid pain and find pleasure, we push away all types of unpleasant emotions. During your awakening, all of the suppressed feelings, old pain, and traumas might resurface. All the balls you were desperately trying to keep under water

pop up one by one. You then find yourself in situations where those old pains are triggered. However, whereas you previously hid or pushed these emotions away, you now have the chance to experience them without resistance.

When we are zoomed in, we want to get rid of emotions, and therefore look for excuses. Now, with new insights, there is the realization that there is nothing wrong with emotions and painful experiences. It is our resistance against these emotions that cause suffering. But pain, joy, anger, happiness, frustration, and disappointment are like waves on the ocean. They come and go again and again, all by themselves.

People Think You Are Crazy

After non-duality is understood on a rational level, it will integrate itself into your daily life. Resistance will fade more every day, and you will be living in a more relaxed and peaceful manner. The day is no longer dedicated to ego games, such as polishing your appearance and chasing a variety of stimuli to feel good. This will lead to several changes in your conditioning. It is not only a new experience for you, but also for the people around you. Your friends, family, and colleagues will have to get used to your new kind of behaviour. People will start to talk to you more, because they notice you can listen without judging too much and without self-interest. But, people might also panic from time to time because you cannot be touched or manipulated as easily as before and you don't pick sides as fast any more. You won't worry about many things and will no longer be fixated on an outcome if plans happen to change. Some people might not be used to that kind of acceptance and it may cause some resistance.

Enlightenment

Eventually, you will start to notice that zooming in does not happen as often any more. At times, the Muppets may still complain a bit, but those thoughts won't be believed anymore. Just as if you were watching a movie, you will now simply observe what events are happening in 'your' life. Emotions will just go on; experiences will just be experienced, all without resistance. There is a Zen saying that points it out perfectly, "Before Enlightenment chop wood carry water, after Enlightenment, chop wood carry water." In short, life just goes on. The only difference is that, before enlightenment, the individual thinks he chops the wood and carries the water, after enlightenment, it is seen that wood is chopped and water is carried, but there is not someone doing it. Things are not taken personally anymore. It happens just like that, without resistance, without guilt, without irrational fears about what could happen, and without frustration about how it could have been different.

If You Start to Live Like That...

A comment I often hear is, 'If I live the way you describe, life will become really easy!' Honestly, this is true; it does become easier. When the worrying mind no longer interferes with your life, everything happens with less of a 'struggle,' — but that doesn't mean 'less effort.'

The child that builds a sand castle still puts in all his or her effort. The child does not waste the '*now*' by worrying about the past and the future. A soccer player that plays intuitively also puts in all his effort; he does not have that internal mental struggle that influences his actions during the game.

As soon as the surrendering to 'what is' happens, the human being will still put effort into things because we are being played by consciousness. We just play our role. What differs is that the trip is now being enjoyed rather than simply hunting to satisfy our craving for the next stimulus to make us feel good.

The Boat Trip

Life is like a boat trip, when we think that we are the captain of the ship, we experience fear, frustration, and stress. Why? Because when the ship sails a course different than the one we had in mind, we panic. We worry about what direction the ship might sail in, and we only feel at ease once we safely reach the harbour. Non-duality shows us that you are not the captain at all! The boat trip is an all-inclusive journey. Relax, enjoy the ride, enjoy the beautiful weather, enjoy the storms, enjoy the dolphins, and enjoy the leaks and broken mast. All situations, unexpected turns, and surprises make the journey an exciting and unforgettable adventure.

The Ocean

What you really are is consciousness. In this consciousness, there are things that appear and disappear again. You are the ocean, where waves come and go again. Such waves can be anything. They can be a feeling, a thought, an emotion, a person, or an experience. They appear and disappear. Everything appears in you and disappears in you; what you really are stays untouched. The ocean will always be water, no matter how many waves there are. If this insight is accepted, you will notice the waves, rather than losing yourself in them.

You are consciousness, and in that consciousness, a plethora of things appear. You also appear and disappear as a body/mind system. Even the idea that you are the chauffeur of that system comes and goes. What you really are is not-two. Everything is one. Given the fact that every form of diversity is only imaginary, our true nature is unity and love.

Enjoy Your Trip!

I hope that you were relaxing on a sofa, chair, or bed while you were reading this book. Now that you have finished it, you can

throw it away. You do not have to read it again or think about how to become enlightened. You already are enlightened! It is only because of the idea that you have to plan and control your entire journey on Earth that you experience stress, frustration, and fear.

You are not separate, you are one, you are infinite love.

Don't worry,
Don't be afraid,
Ever,
because this is just a ride.
– *Bill Hicks (1961–1994)*

About the Author

As seen in this book, the question, 'Who are you?' is quite philosophical. The only thing I can say is that I am consciousness. In this consciousness, there is an appearance with the name Paul. He has pleasant and not-so-pleasant characteristics, he has his preferences, and he has had a passion for philosophy ever since he was a teenager.

At the age of 24, I graduated from the evolution of the human consciousness, and around the age of 29, I came across non-duality. After a process of awakening, my fascination concerning how the universe constantly moves, and how we are all a part of it, grew. In my day-to-day life I perform for companies with a mixture of comedy and philosophy.