



AWAKENING

The Manifesto of a Spiritual Philosopher

**The Journey Toward Non-Dual Thinking,
Sustainability, and Deep Ecology**

Dick Rauscher

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Sustainability, and Deep Ecology*

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PREFACE

Authentic spiritual growth is possible without religion.

I write for those who are religious, and those who are spiritual but not religious. People who choose to embrace a more rational, non-religious path to spiritual growth and growth in consciousness. People who are interested in **transforming the way they think**, the **life they are currently living**, and the **world they live in**. I write for those who hunger for the **wisdom and spiritual growth that comes from the journey into deeper self-awareness**.

Authentic spiritual growth and growth in consciousness are the same subjects. They both happen when we know our mind and how it works.

We use our minds to create our lives and our world. So it makes sense the more we know about the childhood conditioning of our mind and how we think, the more choice we have in how we use it! **Growth in self-awareness provides the wisdom that we can't change what we don't understand about ourselves.**

Spiritual transformation and authentic spiritual growth happen when we have the courage to take action. When we learn to change how we think.

When we:

- learn to become self-aware of our **childhood beliefs and conditioning**,
- have learned to empty our primitive ego of its **need to be “right,”**
- have learned to drop primitive **ego “us vs. them” thinking**,
- have learned to embrace a more evolved **non-dual, both/and consciousness**,
- have transformed our conscious and dropped the dangerous illusion of separateness,
- have learned to **embrace “we” thinking** and the concept of **“mutual benefit”** for all living beings.

INTRODUCTION

My experience is that many people are aching for a sane world but uncertain about what needs to be done to change it.

- They hunger to dance a new and more civil dance with others in the world.
- They understand the reality that **every experience**, we have in our lives, is the **experience of a relationship**.
- They are struggling to create **healthy relationships** with others.
- They are longing to live their life with **greater purpose and intimacy**.
- They are soul weary and fed up with the **lack of civility, rampant extremism, lack of compromise, and out of control violence** that seems to be taking over the world.
- Some are in the Christian Alumni Association... the **spiritual but not religious**.
- Some are longing for an authentic, 21st Century spirituality.
- They feel lost in a world that feels like it is falling apart.
- They are too busy to live in the moment.
- They are unhappy, lonely and living a life that feels like it **lacks meaning**.
- They are trapped in the illusion that they are separate from the rest of creation... the belief that turns all of creation into “it”... ”them”... or “other”.

Can you relate? If so, this manifesto was written for you.

You Are Not Alone!
Together We Are Your Community
The Collective Human Consciousness Of Our
World Is Awakening

PART 1: OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

A 12th century Nasrudin story:

Nasrudin was frantically riding his donkey up and down the streets of his small village one morning. After watching Nasrudin for a while, one of the villagers yelled out “Nasrudin, Nasrudin, what are you doing so frantically riding your donkey up and down the village streets?”

Nasrudin looked back over his shoulder and shouted back “What am I doing? What am I doing? You fool.....I’m looking for my donkey!”

The problem that keeps us from the happiness and meaning we long for, the problem that keeps us from achieving the spiritual goal of a compassionate world, is much like Nasrudin’s donkey. It is so close we fail to see it.

THE PROBLEM

Dualistic thinking is found only in the human mind. It is the primary source of unhappiness and conflict in our lives:

- The unconscious need of our inner child’s primitive ego to split the world into the *dualistic* categories of *good* and *bad*; *right* and *wrong*,
- *Dualism* and dualistic splitting, or “*us vs. them*” *thinking*, is the root feeding the tree of *extremism* in our world today and the fruit of *extremism* is always conflict and *violence*.
- The *conflict, violence, and lack of civility* created by the *ideological extremism* that results from *dualistic primitive ego thinking* are doing violence to the souls of the world....both individually and collectively.
- The fragmented categories of “you” vs. “me” or “*us vs. them*” (The Problem) are dangerously subjective **illusions of separateness** created by our unconscious childhood primitive ego.
- Solving the problems created by the *ideological extremism* of dualistic thinking will be impossible until we understand that the root source of the violence is our primitive ego’s subjective “*us vs. them*” thinking.....**the illusion of separateness.**

The Problem with Dualistic Thinking is:

- our *primitive ego* 's never ending need to always be “*right*”, and
- our *primitive ego* 's **inability to embrace the changes** needed for us to create a more *evolved, enlightened, and awakened* human consciousness... a consciousness that embraces the “whole.”

THE SOLUTION

- Learning to embrace a more *non-dual human* consciousness ... a more wholistic, non-tribal, non-dualistic way of thinking ... in other words, the non-dual spiritual consciousness taught by Rumi, Buddha, Lao Tzu, Jesus and all of humanity's great spiritual teachers, saints, and sages.
- Recognizing that humanity is not a *dualistic collection* of “*us vs. them*”. Humanity is an **interdependent, interconnected, non-dual oneness** or unity called “*we*” and “*us*.”
- Increasing our ability to recognized that our separate “*i*” is an illusion. Recognize that all spiritual growth is achieved by the rational ability to empty our ego of its need to be “*right*.” Let go of the illusion that our “*self*” is an object separate from the rest of reality.

It is that simple!

*The problem is how we think, not what we think.
And how we think is messing up the world...
and our personal lives.*

PART 2: MY JOURNEY

I began my adult life as a dualistic, black and white, either/or thinker; me against the world. And of course, because my inner-child was convinced all good things come from the world, I *knew* happiness would come to me if I were famous, wealthy, and successful in my Electrical Engineering career. My goal was to be a millionaire by the time I was thirty. I was well on my way to achieving those career goals by the time I was thirty-two ... but I wasn't happy. So I quit the corporate life. So much for a successful career and wealth.

Fast Forward A Few Years ...

I woke up the morning of my 35th birthday, threw some wood in the wood stove, and headed to the barn to milk the goats, feed the chickens, and slop the pigs. I was homesteading on 27 acres of land in upstate New York raising a family on \$7000 a year.

Fast Forward a Few More Years ...

It was a warm summer evening in the late 1970's when the universe introduced me to the "rest of my life". An innocent philosophic question was about to change my world. My days of milking goats, building stone walls and racing a dirt bike in cross country "enduro" races were about to become a fond memory.

Like most Saturday evenings in the summer, we were sitting around a campfire drinking beer and making music with five or six neighboring families. The kids were playing kick the can in the field down near the pond.

The musical instruments were back in their cases, and we had settled into quiet conversations about life and philosophy. **Talking about philosophy after a few beers around the campfire is a lot like getting into a taxi and impulsively telling the driver "just drive." You have no idea where you're going to end up.**

The guitar player picked up his beer, looked slowly around the campfire, and asked an innocent philosophic question. "So what would you do with your life if you could do anything you wanted to do with it."

When it came to my turn to answer the question, I impulsively responded: "I would be a Pastor." Talk about a show stopper. The only sound for the next thirty seconds was the crackling of the burning campfire. To this day, I have no idea where those words came from, but over the next few months, I couldn't get them out of my head.

The following spring I signed up for some courses at Colgate-Rochester Seminary to explore the possibility that I might actually enter the Christian ministry. I tried hard to fit in theologically, but my degree in Electrical Engineering and Physics made it hard for me to accept much of what I was being taught.

It wasn't long before the more conservative students made it a point to avoid me in the cafeteria. Their fear, I think, was the possibility that my questions and theological doubts might be contagious.

I began to have serious doubt about my decision to enter the ministry.

The seminary felt like home to me. I loved the sense of community, but my struggle with Christian theology was growing. The traditional conservative Christian beliefs that embraced scientifically illiterate, first-century worldviews lacked the spiritual wisdom and insights I hungered for. At the same time, the desire to grow spiritually was an inner calling I couldn't ignore.

I didn't want to live a life that simply happened to me. I didn't want to live a life that others had chosen for me. I wanted to discover the truth for myself. I wanted to discover for myself why I was here, what my soul had come here to do? What it was that I was meant to contribute to the world? I knew I wanted to add value to the world; not just take up space.

These were the inner conflicts, doubts, thoughts, and questions that I was wrestling with the morning I walked into my first class in Pastoral Counseling 101 ... and knew that I had finally discovered the path I was born to walk.

And, as they say, the rest is history.

Today ...

I went "back to the land" in search of happiness and meaning; to figure out who I was. Working the land for those five years was a rebirthing experience for my soul. The first step of an amazing journey that took me toward a seminary M.Div. Degree; ordination as an Elder in the United Methodist Church; working as a Chaplain and Counselor at Keuka College in upstate New York; an AAPC Fellowship in analytic psychotherapy; and eventually over two decades working in private practice as a Pastoral Psychotherapist. I helped people find meaning in their lives, encouraged them to discover their life purpose, and walked with them as they struggled to discover and embrace the authentic spirituality that called them.

The Three Insights That Changed Everything for Me

I had a successful therapy practice underway, but I saw that the technical, therapeutic language I was taught, was not helping my clients move toward the healing and growth they longed for in their lives.

Insight #1: Survival Skills

When I learned about the concept of “*childhood survival skills*,” I realized my clients were not dealing with neurotic behaviors and character disorders. They were essentially attempting to use the survival skills learned in early childhood to navigate their adult lives.

For the first time, I could “see” the two primary survival skills creating conflict and unhappiness in my client's lives. The Problem. **It was the dualistic, black and white, either/or, good and bad thinking of childhood, combined with their primitive ego’s need to be “right”.**

I recognized that dualistic primitive ego thinking was not only creating conflict and unhappiness in the lives of my clients, it was also responsible for the conflict and pain in my own life as well.

- Everywhere I looked I saw conflict and violence created by dualistic, right/wrong, good/bad, and either/or subjective, primitive ego thinking. I realized it was responsible for most of the conflict and violence being created in the world, in my own life, and in all of human history.
- The violence created by ideological extremism is born in the crucible of dualistic thinking and our primitive ego’s need to be “right”.

I did not know it at the time, but I had just discovered my life passion. The thing I came here to do.

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- *Dualistic thinking and our primitive ego’s need to be “right” are responsible for the conflict, violence, and pain we experience in our lives ... and in the world.*
-

Insight #2: Humility

The second insight that changed the way I see the world began the day I decided to retire from homesteading and return to the modern world. What I learned in the six years following that decision was how hard it is to climb out of poverty and re-enter modern society ... even when that poverty is self-imposed.

I had a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering. I was living on 27 acres in upstate New York fifty-five miles from the nearest large city. My home was a small 12' x 20' foot cabin five hundred feet above the valley floor. A hand pump on the front porch supplied the "running water". We had a two-hole outhouse with a great view of the valley, and an indoor compost toilet. What I *didn't* have was a financial base to support a wife and four children without the income provided by the farm.

We had been living on less than seven thousand dollars a year for half a decade. This was a level of income that was adequate while we were self-sufficient and living off of the land, but woefully inadequate without the food and income provided by our homesteading efforts.

The struggle to get back on my feet taught me humility and created in me a deep compassion for the poor in our world. I was well educated and owned property, but I had no cash to get traction. Without cash, making the transition from self-sufficient homesteading to purchasing food in a grocery store became a financial nightmare. To this day, I emotionally hesitate to answer the phone in fear that it will be another creditor demanding payment or threatening legal action.

When I hear people tell the poor, just get a job, and life will be fine, I know that's not true. Digging out of poverty was an almost overwhelming challenge.

When you are starting from poverty, getting traction to make the journey toward prosperity and success is all but impossible. I shudder to think what it must feel like to begin that journey as a disadvantaged person with limited resources. It was a five-year struggle for me, and I had resources most of the poor, and disadvantaged can only dream about. I also learned to accept the grace and compassion of friends who were willing to reach out and offer me a helping hand when the journey overwhelmed me. Without their help, during those days of struggle to get back on my feet, I'm not sure where I would be today. And I had a college degree!

The humility born in that life experience changed forever the way I see the world and the plight of the poor. The struggle to eliminate "*us vs. them*" thinking created by the illusion of separateness in the world is a very personal issue for me.

Eliminating dualistic "*us vs. them*" thinking, the illusion of separateness, and increasing our human ability to offer compassion to those less fortunate, is the reason I write. It's my life purpose.

Insight #3: Nonduality

The third insight that changed my life was *nonduality* and *non-dual thinking*.

I had the head wisdom from the first two insights. I even had the beginning of the deeper heart wisdom I needed to better care for and support the emotional and spiritual growth of my clients. But coming from an engineering background, I still saw the world in fragmented, bits and pieces of reality. I was not yet “*seeing*” the *wholeness* of reality and creation.

Like Nasrudin’s donkey, that simple reality was so close I couldn’t *see* it.

Awakening to the non-dual wholeness of reality happened when my study of Buddhist psychology changed my spiritual worldview from simple religious beliefs, and human developmental theory, to the deeper wisdom that our “*true-self*” is not our “*ego-self*”.

- We are not a unique “*self*” separate from the rest of the universe as our unconscious primitive ego would have us believe.
- We are not the unconscious primitive ego “*self*” born in the childhood crucible of black and white, right and wrong dualistic thinking.
- We are not just our *body*, and a *mind* filled with thoughts, emotions, beliefs, opinions, assumptions, expectations and hurts.
- We are not a “*self*” defined by our possessions and the various experiences we have had as a “separate” and unique being. That separate ego-“self” is an illusion called our *false-self*. The Problem.

*Our “true self”... is simply
pure observing consciousness.*

It was finally clear to me. Our inner child's dualistic primitive ego, an ego that turns the rest of creation into categories of “them” or “other”, lacks the insight and non-dual maturity needed to manifest unconditional love and compassion in the world.

The dualistic thinking of our childhood primitive ego, the thinking process created inside the illusion of separateness, is and always has been, one of humanity’s greatest dangers and threat. It creates unhappiness, destroys relationships, is the source of judgmental prejudice, and is responsible for most of the conflict and violence we experience in the world both currently and historically.

For the first time, I could see how dualistic thinking, and the violence it creates, stops our ability to evolve an authentic, compassionate spirituality dead in its tracks.

If we do not awaken our human consciousness:

- to the presence of our dualistic primitive ego, to the illusion of separateness, learn to become more self-aware, and
- begin to embrace a true non-dual consciousness,
- **the ability to achieve authentic spiritual growth will not be difficult... it will be impossible.**

Only a true, non-dual, awakened consciousness that embraces the wholeness of creation ... an awakened, non-dual consciousness that refuses to fragment reality into judgmental categories of “us” vs. “them,” has the power to co-create a non-violent, compassionate world.

Stated simply, a separate “i” is an illusion. All spiritual growth is achieved by the rational ability to intentionally empty our primitive ego of the illusion that our “self” is **an object separate from the rest of reality.**

The illusion of separateness creates the greed that drives our global economic system. It is the illusion of separateness that so often drives our obsessive human need to focus on what’s in it for “me”?

The antidote to greed is a consciousness that has learned to embrace a **“we” focus on the “whole”**... a consciousness that understands that the world will not achieve peace until all living beings, and all living systems on our planet, have **equal access to the limited resources** provided by our planet. The concept of **“mutual benefit”**.

Where I Am Today

With this third insight, I finally *knew* my life purpose was simply exploring and writing about;

- the humility, self-awareness, and emptiness of ego required to achieve authentic spiritual growth.

- the spiritual practices required for us to empty our ego and let go of the dualistic “false self” of childhood that thinks it knows how the universe “should” function. In other words, awakening our consciousness to the presence of our inner child's primitive ego and its tendency to “push the river” by ignoring the reality of “what is”.
- the intentional evolution of a true non-dual human consciousness that embraces “mutual benefit” through its interconnection and interdependence with the rest of creation. A consciousness that has learned to live in right relationship with the laws of nature and the natural world.

The journey to become a *non-dual thinker* has been the most exciting, meaningful but difficult spiritual journey I have ever undertaken.

The further I've journeyed toward the creation of a *non-dual consciousness*, the more I am discovering the satisfaction that comes when I have the courage to embrace change more openly. When I intentionally become more self-aware and let go of the idea that my subjective ego beliefs represent absolute truth.

I have more to learn on this spiritual life journey. Fortunately, there are those in our community who have been on this path far longer than myself. Those enlightened souls willing to share their spiritual wisdom that include folks like Bernadette Robert's, Alan Watts, Wendell Berry, Beatrice Bruteau, Andrew Cohen, Steve McIntosh, Anthony DeMello, Eckhart Tolle, the Dali Lama, Tich Nhat Hahn, Peter Russell, and of course, all of humanity's great spiritual teachers, mystics, and sages.

They are humanity's spiritual trailblazers and guides teaching us about *emptiness of ego* and guiding us through the wilderness of our own psyches as we journey toward our true-self. They are the spiritual souls that support and encourage us when we encounter the inevitable spiritual challenges that are part of the spiritual journey toward our *full humanity*.

I am increasingly thankful for the heart wisdom they offer.