



## 10. JERRY KATZ

***NDM: Can you please tell me about your awakening, how and when this happened?***

Jerry Katz: In anyone's spiritual biography you can identify turning points, moments when truth is stumbled into. Those moments could take the form of a sudden awakening, or a question, or a realization of some kind. You stumble into those moments. You can't plan for them to happen and, you know, stop off for a sandwich on the way to experiencing the stumbling. There's nothing linear about stumbling into truth. If it was linear you would see the stumbling block and walk around or over it and never stumble. It is said in the Kaballah that the stumbling block is in your hand. It's not separate from you. You stumble upon yourself.

For most people there is more than one stumbling. I call them initiations. I had several initiations into my true nature as "I Am." They occurred between the ages of 7 and 10. I knew they were important and meaningful but I never knew how to live life with them. So I forgot about them until around age 25, when I revisited them. What got me to revisit them was dissatisfaction with life and the sense that there was something more meaningful I needed to find out about. It was clear that I needed to investigate my early initiations into "I Am."

I spend a couple of years writing about my early experiences, feeling them, investigating them from different angles, and wanting to be stabilized as this "I Am." After about two years, in 1977, that stabilization happened and was marked with the spontaneous utterance, "There is only one day." Everything was seen as one day, or perhaps you could say one moment; in today's language you could say I was living in the now. However, in my words it was as though there was only one day.

The one day feeling lasted for about ten years and then it gave way to an immediacy of awareness as the "I Am" itself apparently dissolved.

Another way of talking about this progression is to say that I started out aware of awareness, then there was the sense that I was awareness, which was aware of me, and finally there is only awareness.

So that's a story of awakening. There is still everyday life, problems, limitations in expression and ability; or is there?

***NDM: When you came to this Self realization, that you are "I Am", were you studying the Kaballah, or anything else like Vedanta, atma vichara, or Buddhism and so on?***

Jerry Katz: As a boy between ages 7-10 the initiations into "I Am" were spontaneous and beyond and outside the influence of any practice, reading, or exposure to ultimate spiritual teachings. Around the age of 25 when I started to investigate "I Am," I read a number of books. The works of Osho (Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh), and Da Free John (Adi Da) were especially helpful. I studied Science of Mind and the correspondence

course offered by the Self-Realization Fellowship of Paramahansa Yogananda. The latter two helped me to discipline day to day living, which was important for being able to focus on "I Am."

***NDM: Then when you finally realized that you are "only awareness". At this point what kind of a vasana load did you have?***

Jerry Katz: There's no realizing that you are only awareness, even though to talk about it one might say, "I am only awareness," or "There is only awareness." It is enough -- it is too much -- to say there is only awareness. To say anything beyond a variation of, "There is only awareness," "There is only this," further diminishes the statement or confession of what is.

Having said that, there was and still are habits and negative psychological states. They are not so extreme. Most importantly it is realized that are not me. Still, one must live responsibly in the world. To exercise a bad habit and to dismiss it by declaring, "Well, yeah, it's bad but it's not me," is an abuse and neglect of discipline.

I am sure that having experienced the "I Am" conditioned me early on toward a life of simplicity. Even though it was not until the age of 25 that I began to investigate my sense of "I Am," prior to that the initiation into "I Am" exerted an influence upon my life. That's what initiation is all about: it is a deep penetration of truth at a cellular level. Compare initiation to a so-called aha experience. The latter is more superficial and activates an energy which tends to burn itself out quickly or which gets channeled toward seeking and self-improvement rather than resting in knowing. However, aha moments are useful in living effectively; it's important to have realizations about the nuts and bolts of day to day living.

***NDM: Can you please explain the difference between sense of being awareness and finally only awareness?***

Jerry Katz: The difference is that in the former there is a fascination with awareness which is sparked by a seeming distance from it, a distance which from time to time disappears, much as the clouds move away from the sun and it is said that the sun comes out. The sense of being awareness is like the sense that the sun is going to come out. "Only awareness" is recognition that you are the sun, a recognition that burns away any forgetting that you are anything else.

***NDM: On page 16 of you book entitled, One. Essential Writings on Nonduality, Sri Ramana talks about the importance of vasana-kshya. The destruction of vasanas. Do you believe it is possible to be Self Realized, to be liberated, (moksha) without destroying these vasanas?***

Jerry Katz: The questioner, not Ramana, was seeing the importance of vasana-kshya. Ramana responded by saying, "You are in that state [of realization] now." Ramana said to "remain as you are." Liberation is complete liberation including the liberation of the vasanas. Nothing is not liberated.

***NDM: What would you say to someone who was saying they were liberated but were still acting out on their vasanas for violence, and saying they are not the doer/perpetrator? That it is God that is the doer/perpetrator of this violence?***

Jerry Katz: It's too hypothetical a question, but if someone came to me with that attitude I would want to know why they have come to me. Are they

boasting, are they testing me, are they questioning themselves, are they experiencing hallucinations or hearing voices? Are they looking for me to justify their excuses to be irresponsible? Are they shifting responsibility to God? I want to know where they are coming from then I would respond.

Essential Writings on Nonduality

***NDM: Ok, let me put it another way. Sri Ramana said:***

***'For those who are very attached to their filthy bodies, all the study of Vedanta will be as useless as the swinging of the goat's fleshy beard unless, with the aid of Divine Grace, their studies lead them to subdue their egos.'***

***Sri Adi Shankaracharya says: The first step to Liberation is the extreme aversion to all perishable things, then follow calmness, self-control, forbearance, and the utter relinquishment of all work enjoined in the Scriptures.***

***do you see it this way or is anyone fit for this, no matter how they behave or are acting out?***

Jerry Katz: Divine Grace doesn't discriminate, so anyone is fit for Liberation. Students and seekers are best not told that, otherwise they might go home and wait for Grace to strike while they're sitting on the couch watching TV. However, being fit for Liberation and realizing Liberation are two different things. Being fit for liberation is nothing more than being fit to live life effectively, and that fitness is useful whether you are a spiritual seeker, a professional athlete, a doctor, or a businessman. Such fitness doesn't attract Grace but it allows Grace to operate optimally;

fitness allows you to handle Grace, the touch of God, which can be quite a life-changing blow.

***NDM: Yes divine grace but how about being fit to practice atma vichara?***

***Sri Adi Shankaracharya says: 69. The first step to Liberation is the extreme aversion to all perishable things, then follow calmness, self-control, forbearance, and the utter relinquishment of all work enjoined in the Scriptures.***

***78. He who is free from the terrible snare of the hankering after sense-objects, so very difficult to get rid of, is alone fit for Liberation, and none else – even though he be versed in all the six Shastras. (Vivekachudamani)***

***Sri Ramana Maharshi also says: ‘Only to such a mind which has gained the inner strength of one-pointedness, Self-enquiry will be successful. But a weak mind will be like wet wood put into the fire of jnana-vichara ‘If the aspirants have not one-pointed mind, which is possible for him who has pure mind full of sattva, dispassion, discrimination, etc., Self-enquiry is impossible.’***

***‘It is easy, the concentration on the Self, for him who has qualities like dispassion, discrimination, one-pointed mind, renunciation, etc. For the rest, it is either less or more, depending on how much one has these qualities. For those who are not prepared, it is very difficult, if not impossible.’***

Jerry Katz: You primarily have to have the hunger to want to know who you are. That hunger alone will "clean up" your life and make you fit to further practice. It will steer you to others who will help you see the blind spots in the way you conduct your life. That hunger to want to know who you are is

Grace and the Guru, at once. However, it does not mean you live a solitary life in the force field of that inner hunger and avoid other teachers, guides, gurus, and helpers. Trust yourself while being open to other teachers, guides, books, and while being open to nature itself.

***NDM: What are your thoughts on neo advaita. Saying that there is No morality. No right or wrong. No meaning? Please See interview with Suzanne Foxton.***

***[www.nondualitymagazine.org/nonduality\\_magazine.1.suzannefoxton.htm](http://www.nondualitymagazine.org/nonduality_magazine.1.suzannefoxton.htm)***

Jerry Katz: I like the neo-advaita movement. It doesn't replace traditional advaita or anything else. It is another offering, that's all. Neo-advaita is nothing new. It simply focuses on the portion of advaita that confesses the reality of what is. Neo-advaita is a partial teaching, but for a given individual it could be a whole teaching, depending on what one is ready to receive.

Suzanne said, "There is no right or wrong." That's true. That's the pure confession of neo-advaita. The Avadhuta Gita makes such statements over and over again: "How can I speak of good and evil? I am free from disease -- my form has been extinguished."

The Avadhuta Gita and a few other texts are more "neo" than neo-advaita. Neo-advaita writings or discussions probably always have contained within them some instruction, some suggestion of what to do in order to realize what the neo-advaitin confesses. The Avadhuta Gita has no such instruction. The Avadhuta Gita doesn't tell you to investigate anything. It doesn't tell you to follow the I Am, as Nisargadatta has urged. It doesn't tell you to Full Stop, as 'Sailor' Bob Adamson advises. It doesn't suggest you

inquire into who you are, what you're doing, why you're here, what the truth is, or anything at all. It just confesses. Period.

Neo-advaita is not as extreme as some very old writings. Neo-advaita is an evolution, a morphing of those writings and at the same time a morphing of traditional advaita. The morphing, the evolution continues, and watching that evolution is the delight of being involved in the world of nonduality.

***NDM: Yes, but Avadhuta Gita is also reading material meant for the use of advanced students.***

Jerry Katz: It is appropriate for today's mainstream nondual spirituality audience, I feel. Even James Swartz, a current and strong proponent of the stepwise teaching of traditional Advaita Vedanta, includes Avadhuta Gita style of confessions in his book *How to Attain Enlightenment*. For example, he says, "I am neither a person nor a non-person ... I am not male, female, or neuter ... I have never lived or died ... I am pure knowing, even though there is nothing to know." The entire book explains details about life, practice, experience, and those confessions occur at the end of the book in a section called *Beyond Enlightenment*. With the proper preparation, such as delivered by Swartz in his book, or with a strong intuition of truth, these confessions and the Avadhuta Gita itself become understandable. I wrote a series of verses based on the Avadhuta Gita, called *The Wild Song of Standing Free*, which is available online here:

<http://members.upnaway.com/~bindu/windsong/stafreeindex.htm>. I wrote that in 1997, before I went on the Internet, and it served to prepare me for the adventure of introducing nonduality to a mainstream audience and to deal with all the people I would be encountering.

***NDM: The Ashtavakra Gita is also from the absolute level.***

Jerry Katz: Yes, The Ashtavakra Gita is more popular than the Avadhuta Gita, too.

***NDM: Yes on this absolute level there is no right or wrong. But what about on the relative level. See here.***

***[www.enlightened-spirituality.org/neo-advaita.htm](http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/neo-advaita.htm) |***

Jerry Katz: People may teach with reference to such levels, but teachers don't go around thinking about what level they're in. One might question whether there is a relative level or an absolute level. Such a questioning is an inquiry. If you inquire from time to time, "Is this the relative level?" "Is this the absolute level?" at what level do you find yourself upon making these inquiries? Questions about right or wrong, absolute and relative levels, have doors within them that take you out of the questions. Turning a question into an inquiry exposes the door and opens it. And then where do you find yourself? For example, the question, "Is there right or wrong?" can be turned into the inquiry, posed randomly throughout the day, "Is this right or wrong?" It may be seen that there is no right or wrong in that moment of inquiry and also that there is no relative or absolute level.

***NDM: Dattatreya is considered by some to be the predecessor of the Aghori tradition. The tantric left hand path. Are you saying that neo-advaita is a new western left hand path of the Aghori? That Tony Parsons and Suzanne Foxton, Jeff Foster are some kind of neo-advaitic tantric Aghori? Breaking all taboos and violating traditions?***

Jerry Katz: I'm not saying that. Dattatreya's tradition doesn't have a bearing on his confession of truth. Jay Michaelson has recently introduced nondual Judaism to the world. Jay has written that as a Jew he keeps kosher and follows other Jewish practices. Jeff Foster, for example, may state things similar to Jay, however it doesn't mean Jeff keeps kosher. Although it wouldn't hurt if he did, haha! Truth is truth and it is expressed in multitudes of ways by people with all kinds of backgrounds. Many of the expressions sound alike. There is a sharing in the similarity of expression but not necessarily in other details of a person's life.

***NDM: Yes, ok. When you said earlier. "Such a questioning is an inquiry. If you inquire from time to time, "Is this the relative level?" "Is this the absolute level?" at what level do you find yourself upon making these inquiries?***

***Would not that depend on the level you are at. For example, how could a non realized person even know the difference with out "knowing" the absolute level? If you are not the absolute, all you know is the relative? You can understand it to a degree, but cannot "know" it. The knowing only comes with realization.***

Jerry Katz: The inquiry is sufficient if a person has had only an intuition of the absolute. However, I don't recommend doing inquiry just for the heck of it. Behind all efforts there must be the hunger to know who you are. Inquiry is a powerful tool. One must find an inquiry that truly draws their attention.

***NDM: Did you experience at any point, close to your realization, intense temptation by your ego to co-opt this in any way. Such as your shadow self at the time trying to make a power grab and use it for its own motivations?***

***Bernadette Roberts talks about this here.***

***"The major temptation to be overcome in this period is the temptation to fall for one of the subtle but powerful archetypes of the collective consciousness. As I see it, in the transforming process we only come to terms with the archetypes of the personal unconscious; the archetypes of the collective consciousness are reserved for individuals in the state of oneness, because those archetypes are powers or energies of that state. Jung felt that these archetypes were unlimited; but in fact, there is only one true archetype, and that archetype is self. What is unlimited are the various masks or roles self is tempted to play in the state of oneness - savior, prophet, healer, martyr, Mother Earth, you name it. They are all temptations to seize power for ourselves, to think ourselves to be whatever the mask or role may be. In the state of oneness, both Christ and Buddha were tempted in this manner, but they held to the "ground" that they knew to be devoid of all such energies. This ground is a "stillpoint", not a moving energy-point. "***

***[www.spiritualteachers.org/b\\_roberts\\_interview.htm](http://www.spiritualteachers.org/b_roberts_interview.htm)***

Jerry Katz: I never had such dramatic experiences. I'm sure a lot of the shocks encountered in the adventure to nonduality were, in my case, ameliorated by the substantial initiation into "I Am" that occurred in my childhood. We're each put together differently and we each unravel differently, and in that unraveling the sparks of all kinds of experiences and psychological encounters could take off.

***NDM: What are your thoughts on Sri Aurobindos intermediate zone? Do you think this could be an explanation for Adi Da and Osho? Please see here.***

[www.kheper.net/topics/gurus/IMZ\\_guru.html](http://www.kheper.net/topics/gurus/IMZ_guru.html)

Jerry Katz: You'll see in my work on nonduality that I have never been into rating gurus. I like some and don't like some, but I don't rate. One of the qualities of my work has been to create a list of gurus/teachers/realizers/confessors which included just about anyone who spoke with some real knowing of the realized state. I don't see that some people are more enlightened than others. It doesn't interest me too much -- except in a gossipy way.

Seekers and students need to connect with their own inner knowing, their own inner hunger for truth, and to allow the inner force to be one's teacher and guide. That, in fact, is the Guru. One may then be led to this or that teacher. If so, from a practical point of view one should learn as much as possible about a prospective teacher.

***NDM: When you say "There's no realizing that you are only awareness, even though to talk about it one might say, "I am only awareness," or "There is only awareness." It is enough -- it is too much -- to say there is only awareness. To say anything beyond a variation of, "There is only awareness," "There is only this," further diminishes the statement or confession of what is."***

***So what is it that "knows" that it is awareness? What is this knower that knows this and how does this knower get to know this?***

Jerry Katz: There is no knower and no knowing of it. There is only it. As far as getting to know this, it is said that Direct Path teachings can facilitate

that. These days Greg Goode might have the best handle on the "There is only awareness" realization.

***NDM: It obviously isn't "seen" as neo advaita people say because a seer cannot see itself no more than an eye can see its own pupil?***

Jerry Katz: Yes, it isn't seen. It is. To say "It is," is, again, too much, which is why silence is a teaching.

***NDM: What do you think that happened in the cases of Da Free John (Adi Da) and Osho?***

Jerry Katz: Probably nothing new to add to this. They were human beings with human limitations and blindspots. They were not different from you or I in that way. What's amazing to me about those guys is not that they were enlightened but that they were in possession of awesome intellects and charismatic qualities. Their intellect and charisma allowed their teachings to become valued and widespread and to benefit many people, however they were screwed up in some ways and hurt people too. When incidents of controversy as exhibited by Adi Da and Osho are seen, then one must investigate what is about them that is bothersome and puzzling. Take these incidents and make them your own inquiry.

***NDM: Have you seen this silent teaching by Adi Da. What are your thoughts on this?***

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=l\\_bokk0KR7I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_bokk0KR7I)

Jerry Katz: I watched it. The music isn't necessary. It's a nice video of an interesting guy. I don't make much of it. It is possible to get caught in the charismatic and psychological grip of certain people, especially if they are extremely attractive in the way of intellect, celebrity, power, and psychic magnetism. I look for a teacher that turns me toward what I am on a fundamental level, not toward what he or she is on a psychic or some other energetic level. This video turns me toward the psychic energy of Adi Da, not toward the fundamental nature of what I am.

***NDM: What are your thoughts on Christ consciousness as Paramahansa Yogananda describes it? Was he seeing this as an object? Consciousness as a thing, or a reflection of the Self?***

Jerry Katz: It's been too many years since I've studied Yogananda. I had to read the article on Wikipedia to refresh myself on him. Apparently he was talking about nonduality in the way the audience of his time (1920-1950) could understand. A quote from the Wikipedia article shows that he was saying nothing different from Ramana Maharshi:

"Self-realization is the knowing in all parts of body, mind, and soul that you are now in possession of the kingdom of God; that you do not have to pray that it come to you; that God's omnipresence is your omnipresence; and that all that you need to do is improve your knowing."

My sense is that he would not have seen Christ Consciousness as an object but as who he was, as a sublime expression of reality beyond which is what could perhaps be called the Father or emptiness or awareness. At some point the terms we use need to be defined. I would call the "I Am" the Christ Consciousness. Although the experience of Christ Consciousness or Mystical Oneness may be full of literal light, soul travel, meetings with

heavenly beings, and so on, when all that excitement settles down it resolves itself as the "I Am": a simple presence and knowing residing in the atmosphere of awareness itself.

***NDM : On page one of your book you say "However , being by its nature cannot be known. so words can only give us a direction in which to look"***

***James Swartz for example says that Vedanta is Shabda, a word means. He says that it is crystal clear on where to look and what to look at. It is more than using pointers. It is a statement of fact. It is a statement that delivers knowledge. It does not point to anything. It removes ignorance. He says the difference is a pointer leaves you looking, searching, seeking. Self knowledge removes the one who is looking. For example. The word Awareness is Awareness. Its not a pointer. It's saying the sun rises in the East, not the West. How do you see this?***

Jerry Katz: Formal Advaita starts out as a pointing and develops into a more refined pointing. At some point the words themselves are known as not separate from what is being pointed to. Advaita means "not-two" so how could there be separation between the finger and what is being pointed to? They ever-arise perfectly. It becomes known that "There is only this," as the neo-advaitins confess. This is this: this perfect arising of individualistic things. Residing in or abiding in the perfect arising as the perfect arising, what am I? What am I not? So yeah, there is talk of pointing and the failure of words, and then there's talk of all things arising as they are, individual and without division. If nonduality isn't coming across as paradoxical then it's been cooked too long.

***NDM: Yes, ok, but what is "There is only this,"? How does that deliver any clear knowing?.***

Jerry Katz: The statement is a variation of "There is only awareness," or "There is only God." "There is only truth." "There is only this moment." It could resonate with a person's intuition or intellectual understanding of interconnectedness, or with their experience of oneness. As part of some response or description, the statement could strike a chord of clarity for a person. However, to deliver that statement as a first and last teaching consisting only of words and bearing no knowing-substance on the part of the teacher, could mean you have meaningless words. Therefore, clarity arises when there is substance behind the words, substance consisting of the teacher's realization and the student's or devotee's intuition and experience of nonduality.

***NDM: In the chapter on the Kaballah in your book you hint at Moses being given this secret non dual truth by God. The I Am-ness. Do you believe that Jesus Christ also made the exact same Self discovery as Moses?***

Jerry Katz: Yes. There are two bottom line teachings, that of the "I Am" or the Holy Spirit, and that at Ein Sof, or, in Christ's term, The Father. Anyone can know these. You don't have to be a legendary religious figure. Some people know these truths and sweep floors for a living. Others have served as the seed for major world religions. One is not more wonderful than the other.

***NDM: Why did Jesus talk about this truth in public while Moses kept this truth hidden?***

Jerry Katz: I'm not a scholar on this topic so I can't confirm the assumption, but let's say it was the case. The same could be said about the guy

sweeping floors. Why is he or she sweeping floors when he knows the Absolute? Jesus and Moses each had his way, his people, his time, his job to do; and each had different people around him, serving him, representing him, trying to understand him. They were different men operating in different spheres of engagement. Implicit in the question is whether some evolutionary force was involved in the differences between the two men. I would call the evolutionary force Grace and, yes, Grace is always present and exerting a force. But don't ask me why Grace does what it does. Certainly Grace wouldn't know.

***NDM: The way that Ein sof is explained sounds almost identical to the Vedas. Do you know if the people of Moses' time ever visited India through the silk trade routes, across Iran, Persia, Arabia, Pakistan and into India?***

***The Shaktona (symbol of shiva/shakti union) is identical to the Star of David. Do you think this was a coincidence?***

Jerry Katz: I'm not up on the history to be able to answer this. I would have to research it. Great questions.

***NDM: What do you teach by the way. Do you have a method of teaching. Do you do satsangs or anything like that?***

Jerry Katz: I don't teach or give satsang. My work is to bring nonduality to mass consciousness in a variety of ways: Through websites, email forums, a blog, twitter, radio appearances, conference development, public speaking, organizing local gatherings, interviews, publishing e-books, individual correspondences, encouraging and supporting various people in

the field of nonduality, writing book reviews. Of course a lot of teachers do those activities, and more, too. If I did teach there wouldn't be any method. I would look at what each person requires and offer direction and guidance that is right for that person.

***NDM: How long have you been doing this work of bringing non duality awareness to mass consciousness?***

***Can you please elaborate a little more on your work and the impact this has had?***

Jerry Katz: I first went onto the Internet in November, 1997. My intent was to bring nonduality "to the streets," to the spirituality mainstream. At the time, nonduality was a topic and a word largely reserved for discussion within ashrams, the circles of certain teachers, and university departments of philosophy and religious studies, and as well as part of the lesser known teachings of the world's religions.

The best known nonduality teaching is Zen, which belongs to Buddhist tradition. I wanted to introduce nonduality as a broader Zen. To do that, I introduced the word "nonduality" itself and colored it according to a vision. Just as the word "Zen" has a certain magic and power to it, it is my opinion that the word "nonduality" has its own significant meaning or "color." I have tried to keep nonduality wide open and all-embracing.

Many people are involved in bringing nonduality to the mainstream. I have provided online spaces for people to gather and talk about nonduality in whatever way they wished and have welcomed and encouraged a number of people. Over the years the broad teaching of nonduality and the word "nonduality" itself have entered the spirituality mainstream and even the general mainstream.

Lives are impacted in different ways. There's a peaceful, holistic, harmonious, Yogic side to nonduality which benefits a person's life. It is more about coherence and oneness. Then there is the jarring and harsh side of nonduality -- the bottom line nonduality -- in which our ego strategies are seen through or split wide open. Knowing who you are requires a cutting away of who you think you are. Practically no one is exempt from that harshness since layers of ego strategy are constantly re-constituting. For living life effectively, I highly recommend the holistic, Yogic type of path. Seeing who your really are, which is the atmosphere in which this effective life is lived (and which it actually is) requires that one question the effective life even while living it. It's tricky business and only those who have no other choice will engage in it.

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